Class E601
Book .G66
PRESENTED BY

EXPERIENCES IN THE CIVIL WAR.

M. L. Gordon

M. L. Gordon's

Experiences in the Civil War

FROM HIS NARRATIVE, LETTERS AND DIARY

EDITED BY DONALD GORDON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON
Privately Printed
1922

E601
.G66

Gift-
Mrs. Donald Gordon
F. 9, 1924

D. B. UPDIKE · THE MERRYMOUNT PRESS · BOSTON

TO

SAMUEL COLCORD BARTLETT, JR.

PVT., 1 CL., C BTRY., 103 F. A., 26 DIV., A. E. F.

AND

TO THE HAPPY MEMORY OF

GORDON BARTLETT

CPL., D BTRY., 17 F. A., 2 DIV., A. E. F.

(DIED OF WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION AT ST. MIHIEL)

GRANDSONS

NOT UNWORTHY IN THEIR GENERATION

PREFACE

THE narrative of my father's experiences in the Civil War was written down, to please me, at odd times during the years 1889 *and* 1890. *So far as I know, he never read the manuscript over, and I brought it with me from Japan in the spring of* 1891. *In* 1901, *while on a visit to Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, I was given the letters which follow the narrative by my great-uncle, William Gordon, to whom all but one of them were written. The brief diary which in turn follows the letters was found by me among my father's papers in the summer of* 1902. *I do not know when it left his possession, or when it was returned to him: I am certain only that he did not have it while writing the narrative.*

The letters and diary are printed exactly as they stand. In the narrative I have transposed three paragraphs and made a very few slight verbal changes, as I am sure my father would have done. A complete minute of these alterations is given in Appendix A. An account of the services of my father's company, quoted from "History of Greene County, Pennsylvania," by Samuel. P Bates (Chicago, 1888), *will be found in Appendix B.*

The originals of the illustrations are all owned by me, except the photograph of John A. Gordon in uniform, his hatchet-head, and the autograph of Rebecca S. Crawford. Of these the first two belong to my uncle, Edgar C. Gordon, and the last is from an album owned by my aunt, Rebecca (Gordon) West—both of Waynesburg.

DONALD GORDON

Boston, July 18, 1922

CONTENTS

	PAGE
EXPERIENCES IN THE CIVIL WAR	3
LETTERS	25
DIARY	53
APPENDICES	67

ILLUSTRATIONS

M. L. Gordon — FRONTISPIECE
From a photograph by M. Hori, Kyoto, Japan, about 1890. *Autograph from letter of January* 17, 1900

John A. Gordon — FACING PAGE 3
From a daguerreotype, 1854–57. *Autograph from letter of April* 15, 1889

Rebecca S. Crawford — 4
From a daguerreotype prior to 1853. *Autograph from album of* 1840

M. L. Gordon as a Boy — 6
From a daguerreotype

Private M. L. Gordon, 1861 — 8
From a photograph by Brady, Washington, D.C.

Lieutenant John A. Gordon — 10
From a photograph

John A. Gordon's Sword, Spur, and Hatchet-Head — 12

Map of Charleston Harbor — 14
From a sketch by M. L. Gordon, 1888–90

M. L. Gordon's Warrant as Sergeant — 16

M. L. Gordon's Warrant as Acting Sergeant-Major — 18

Sergeant M. L. Gordon, November, 1864 — 20
From a photograph by Evans, Norfolk, Virginia

John A. Gordon's Commission as Captain — 30

John A. Gordon's Shoulder-Straps — M. L. Gordon's Cap-Strap — 40

M. L. Gordon's Diary — 53
Size of original 3×5½ *inches*

M. L. Gordon's Discharge — 58

Map of James River — 65
From a war-time sketch by M. L. Gordon

NARRATIVE

John A Goodon

EXPERIENCES IN THE CIVIL WAR

I WAS born in a white frame-house in Waynesburg [Pennsylvania], July 18, 1843. Among my earliest recollections are those of going to school to my father,[1] learning to read in McGuffey's First Reader. About the same time my mother[2] woke me up one morning by telling me that my father had joined the Sons of Temperance (in which he was quite active); and a little later she told me that he had enlisted for the Mexican War. The company was not accepted, however, and so the family had no part in a war which was then very popular with us, but which history does not speak very highly about. The return of the few who went from Waynesburg in other companies is also one of my early recollections.

From infancy I was taken to church and Sunday School. At that time my father was a teacher of a Bible Class for adults, which met on Sunday afternoons, and I can remember going with him and listening to their discussions.

My father always kept a horse, sometimes three or four, and as a boy I was very fond of riding. Long before I was ten years old I remember riding alone to a place twelve or fifteen miles away. The horse I rode was named "Henry," and I can remember his throwing me off—perhaps I ought to say my falling off—more than once.

It was always a special delight to us to visit Carmichaels, my mother's old home, where her mother[3] and several of her brothers lived. There were quite a number of children and we had fine times

[1] John Adam Gordon, born June 16, 1816.

[2] Rebecca Slater (Crawford) Gordon, born April 12, 1815. They were married October 14, 1842.

[3] Salome (Jennings) Crawford, born August 22, 1773.

together. The fall before my mother died I drove her down there with a horse we called "Robert."

From the time of my mother's death,[1] which I remember very well, we lived on a farm, and in the last years before I went to school, I can remember how hard the work was. I would wake up in the night, and, if Saturday, would rejoice to think that there was a day and nearly two nights before the work began.

When the College was started in Waynesburg,[2] a Preparatory Department was made for it, and here I studied for a number of years. I began teaching school before I was seventeen, teaching that winter and the next. A part of the next summer I spent at school in Waynesburg, and that September I enlisted with my father for "three years, or during the war."

The regiment in which my father and I enlisted, was organized at Uniontown, about forty miles from our home. The colonel was Joshua B. Howell, a lawyer of that place. My father was captain of our company when it went into camp, but as the company had only about half the requisite number of men, at Uniontown we united with Captain I. M. Abraham's company, my father becoming first lieutenant; and on November 12, 1861, we were sworn into the service as "Company G, 85th Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers."

We started almost immediately for Washington, being reviewed by the Governor,[3] and receiving our flag, at Harrisburg. Arriving in Washington, we were first sent into camp out east of the city, near Bladensburg,—"Camp Wilder" I think it was called. Here we were under the care of the now well-known General O. O. Howard. A little

[1] April 11, 1853. [2] Waynesburg College, chartered March 25, 1850.
[3] Andrew G. Curtin.

Rebecca G. Crawford

later we were sent south of what I believe is called "East River," where we spent the winter on the hills, building one or two forts and drilling a good deal. The place was called "Fort Good Hope," and it was a time of hope for us all.

While here I frequently went to Washington, visiting the Capitol, the White House, the Treasury, the Patent Office, and other public buildings. All was new, of course, to the boy from the country. Several visits to Congress were especially interesting. At that time our representative in Congress was General Jesse Lazear, the superintendent of our Waynesburg Sunday School, and a very intimate friend of my parents. During the winter I was assigned to the Color Guard, a position which relieved me from some of the disagreeable duties of a soldier but, by separating me somewhat from the other soldiers, was not wholly desirable. Several weeks after our going into camp here, my father was ordered back to Pennsylvania on recruiting service. He was stationed at Brownsville, and did not return to the regiment till the end of the following May; I did not see him till August.

After a few days spent on the hills north of Washington, we sailed in April [1862] for Fortress Monroe, embarking at Alexandria. On the way I had my first experience of seasickness, though I did not recognize it as such. When we landed at Old Point we had no money, were practically out of food, and were weak and hungry from the journey and from seasickness. Scores of fat, jolly-looking darkies crowded around us with pies and cakes: perhaps the strongest temptation of my life to steal was just then. We were marched out beyond the Fort towards Hampton, and were hoping and expecting to stop every minute, but we kept on and on, till within a mile or

so of Newport News. On the way a cook in some regiment or wagon train at the roadside gave me a half-pint of pea soup. I have tasted nothing better since. This was on Monday. We got no regular food till Thursday, and so I had here the hungriest experience of my life. I remember how the soldiers went out into a field which had been a potato patch the year before, and dug all around with their hands for the little potatoes which had been left by the farmers.

We were here only a week or two, when we went on to the vicinity of Yorktown. The weather was very rainy. We cut down pine saplings and laid them together for our bedsteads. Sometimes there would be two or three inches of water collected under the bed. We were in Keim's Brigade of Casey's Division. One dark rainy night our regiment was ordered out to the front where there was quite lively musketry firing. I can remember how the thought came to me, "What if I should be killed?" I think I had been a Christian before, but I can remember how clearly the thought came to me that while my death might be a loss to my friends, it could bring no loss to me.

When the rebels evacuated Yorktown[1] we were ordered to follow, but the roads were so bad and the number of troops ahead of us so great that our progress was slow. Of course there was a great deal of confusion. The second day, I think it was, fresh beef was issued to us—probably some cattle they could not well take along—but no salt. The way we managed it was to cut a slice of salt beef and put it on the end of a stick, then one of fresh beef, and so on; and as we toasted it over the camp-fire the juice of the salt beef would run out over the fresh beef, making it quite palatable.

[1] May 3–4, 1862.

M. B. Gordon

We arrived at the Williamsburg battlefield in the afternoon of the last day of the fight,[1] and were thrown in line in a clover field with other regiments of the brigade. There was pretty heavy musketry in front of us, and cannonading too. It was our first real taste of war, and, as may be imagined, our feelings were not especially pleasant. One soldier expressed the inward feelings of a good many when he cried out, "Oh, where is my man? I'll make it up with him." In the evening, just at dusk, a staff officer came riding back to General Keim, who was near our regiment, and asked for a regiment to go into the woods ahead to take place on the front line of battle. Thereupon Colonel Howell gave the command "*Forward, Eighty-fifth!*" and in we went. The fighting was in reality about over, as the Rebels were already retreating. Fort Magruder, however, kept up a fire for most of the night, the cannon-balls going almost entirely over our heads and to our rear. The rain poured down, and it was quite cold. Wandering around in the woods I found a knapsack, and, as it had a good flannel shirt in it, I took off my wet one and put that on. The next day we advanced through Williamsburg, seeing everywhere evidences of the haste with which the Rebels had fled, —deserted wagons, cannon, some prisoners, etc.

A day or two later I began to feel the effects of the night before Williamsburg. A heavy fever set in, and, as we had no way to transport sick men, I fell behind. From the time we left Yorktown it had been raining much of the time, and the roads were simply awful. Late that night I fell in with an ammunition train, and one of the drivers was kind enough to let me ride on one of his wagons, though he had no right to do so. I suppose he saw how sick a boy I was.

[1] May 5, 1862.

The next day, I think it was, at New Kent Court House, the doctors decided to send me away, and I was taken to Cumberland Landing and sent by boat to Yorktown. The chaplain of the regiment, Rev. Mr. Pierce, was exceedingly kind in helping me to the boat. After a few days at Yorktown we were taken to the hospital at Newport News, where I rapidly recovered health and strength.

While in the hospital at Newport News, as well as when we were encamped near there, we saw the wreck of the "Cumberland," which had been sunk by the "Merrimac" only a very short time before.[1] We also saw in Hampton Roads the "Monitor"—that "cheese-box on a raft"— which in such a timely way put an end to the work of the "Merrimac."

About the first of June we were put on board a large steamer and sent to New York. The immediate cause of this was to clear out the hospital for the large number of sick and wounded who were being sent back from the front, as this was just after the battle of Fair Oaks. Going down to the wharf at Newport News I thought I would slip out of the ranks and run to a shop and buy a loaf of the nice aërated bread which I knew was for sale there. I had taken but a few steps, however, when the ground suddenly flew up and hit me in the face, and I realized that I was not so strong as I had supposed myself to be.

At New York we were taken in carriages from the boat to "Park Barracks" on Broadway, close by the City Hall. Here Soldiers' Relief Committees of both ladies and gentlemen took care of us, and we found it quite a different world from that we had left at the front. Agents from Pennsylvania met us, secured furloughs for us,

[1] March 8, 1862.

Private M L Gordon
1861
(The stripes were apparently trimmings)

and we were soon on our way home. We took the cars at night and reached Harrisburg very early next morning. It was late in June, when everything in that state is at its best, and, as I had seen nothing of country life since leaving the Peninsula, which had been made bare by the ravages of the troops of both sides, I seemed to have entered Paradise itself.

By the end of July I was strong enough to leave home. When I got back to New York a young fellow dressed in a soldier's uniform met me on the Jersey City ferry-boat and said he was just returning too, but as it was too late to go up to the office on Grant Street that night, he was going to stay with a friend, and asked me to go along with him. So, as his friend's house was near, I went with him. His friend's house proved to be a saloon, and I parted company with my new friend at once. No doubt he had been sent out to decoy unwary soldiers.

On reporting for duty, I was told to go to Fort Hamilton at the entrance to the harbor. The officer who sent me down there evidently knew something of what I had in store for me, for pity (or something very like it) was in his eye as he gave me my tickets for the street-cars to the Fort. I got there in the evening and found two or three hundred rough "bounty-jumpers" under guard, and I was put in among them. We were ordered to fall in, and were marched out to supper. Quite a number seemed to have come in that day, so the supper was all gone before I got into the dining-room. The sergeant, who was a kind-hearted young regular, allowed me to go out into a hotel near by and buy my supper. Two or three days after this we embarked and sailed for Harrison's Landing, where McClellan's army was then lying.

To go back to my father. He returned to the regiment about the end of May, expecting to see me, as he had heard nothing of my sickness. Colonel Howell met him with his usual smile, telling him what a splendid soldier I was proving myself to be. When my father told him I was not in the regiment, and had not been for ten days, the Colonel was somewhat taken aback. My father was with the regiment at the battle of Fair Oaks,[1] and through the "Seven Days' Battles"[2] on the retreat to Harrison's Landing. A part of this time he was in command of Company I. He heard nothing of me till he saw my name in the list of sick taken to New York, and the people in Waynesburg heard nothing either, so some thought I was dead, and I made quite a sensation when I got home.

A few days after I got back to the regiment my father was placed in charge of the Ambulance Corps of General J. J. Peck's Division. This made him a staff officer, his designation being "Acting Assistant Adjutant General of the Ambulance Corps." The position was a good one, giving him a horse and easier duties, but was not quite so much as the high-sounding name would seem to imply. As he did not really return to duty with the company till within a few months of the expiration of our term of service, it will be seen that, although we were in the same company and regiment, we really served together for a very short time. He was often near us for quite a long while at a time, so I had many pleasant rides on his horse.

[1] There is some doubt in my mind on this point; he may not have got back till the second day of the battle [June 1, 1862]. M. L. G.

[2] June 25–July 1, 1862. In December, 1889, John A. Gordon wrote: "The sword I took into the service with me I left on the peninsula in Va. The scabbard became much worn and disfigured and some of the fastenings gave way. Some of our men found a sword in the woods where the rebel cavalry made an attack on our lines and were driven back. The men seemed to think the rebel cavalry lost it, but it was of American manufacture and was likely lost by our own men."

Lieutenant John A. Gordon

About the middle of August McClellan's army was withdrawn from the James. Our division, however, did not go back to Washington, but remained in Virginia, first near Hampton, and later near Suffolk, on the south side of the James, about twenty miles out from Norfolk, at an important railroad junction. Suffolk is a very pleasant old town, and our three months here were among the most enjoyable of our three years. The Rebels were about twenty miles away on the opposite side of the Blackwater River, and we made frequent raids out there, going out in the night, attacking them about daybreak, and coming leisurely back the next day.

About the first of December[1] our brigade—which since just before the battle of Fair Oaks had been under the command of Brigadier-General H. W. Wessels, a regular army officer—marched to the Blackwater River (or rather to the Chowan, by which name it is known lower down in its course), where we found transports awaiting us. Embarking on these, we steamed down the Chowan into Albemarle Sound, Pamlico Sound, and up the Neuse River, to Newbern, North Carolina. Here we found that an expedition was planned to go eighty miles up into the interior and cut the railroad near Goldsboro. This was just at the time of Burnside's attack on Fredericksburg, and the object was to prevent reënforcements being sent to Lee.

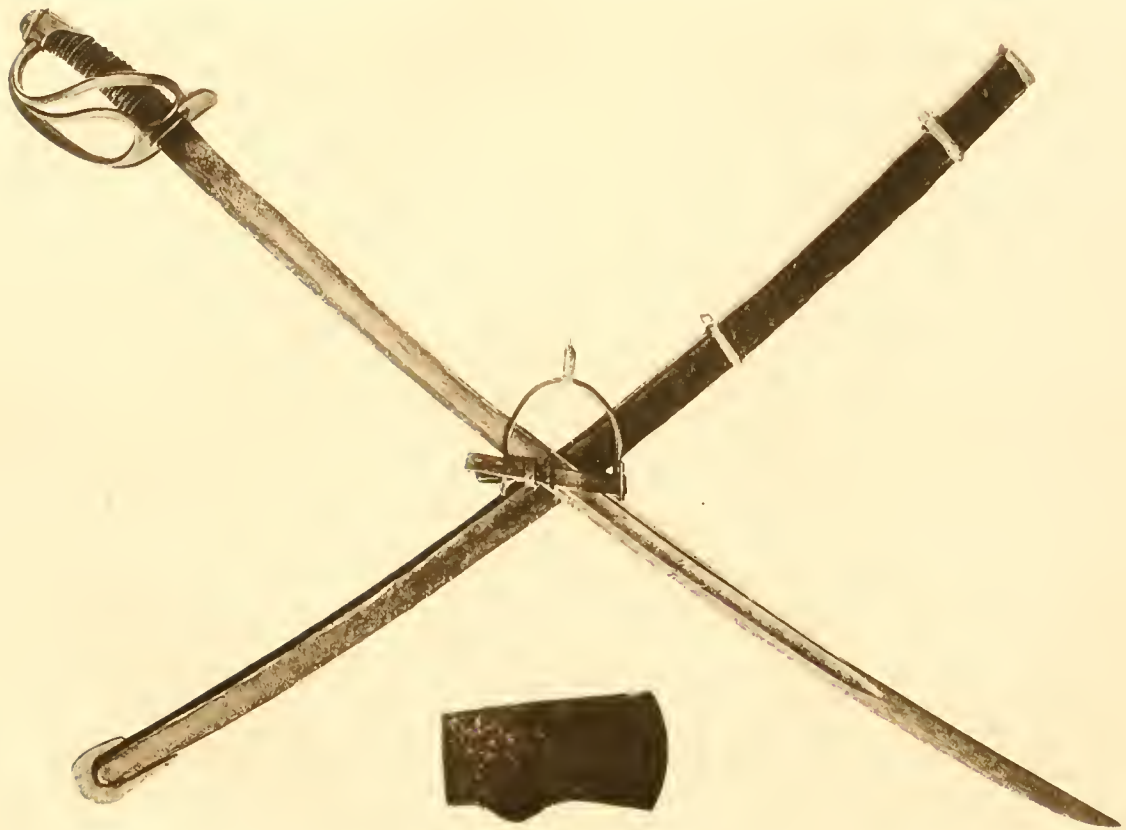
We first met the enemy near Kinston,[2] where the Southerners resolutely defended a bridge. Our regiment was sent to the left of the road, to advance through a cedar swamp, the water being from a few inches to one or two feet deep. In the middle of the swamp we were ordered to unsling our knapsacks that we might advance more rapidly. We never saw them again. The enemy were in force just

[1] December 5, 1862. [2] December 14, 1862.

beyond the swamp and near the bridge, but our advance through the swamp was so unexpected and so rapid that they soon retreated. They held the bridge as long as they could, and then set fire to it as they hurriedly retreated. Our troops, however, put the fire out before it was seriously damaged. Some of the men were killed just here and we saw their half-burned bodies as we passed over the bridge. What cheering there was when it was all over! And how tired we all were! Colonel Grey of the 96th New York was killed here, and I can remember seeing his men gather around him like sheep that have lost their shepherd. Our regiment suffered very little, as the Confederates fired over our heads.

After it was all over and we were lying in a cornfield not far from the bridge, I saw two soldiers of the 10th Connecticut walking back in rear of us. One of them seemed to be sick or wounded, and finally the other one went off and left him lying there. I got the Captain's permission and went back to the man, gave him a drink out of my canteen, asked him where he was hurt, etc. After several incoherent replies, he said, "The truth is I have been drinking too much applejack!" This was treasured up as a joke on me for quite a while afterward.

Our regiment had been in front, next the skirmishers, so far. Now, in view of our hard service, we were put nearer the rear as the expedition pushed on towards Goldsboro. We had more or less fighting every day, and, as the marching was hard, a good many fell out of ranks. Many of the soldiers belonging in Newbern wore boots sent from home which were utterly unfit for marching, and it was no unusual thing to see men walking along in their stocking feet over the frozen ground, carrying their boots in their hands. I determined



John A Gordons Sword. Spur and Hatchet-Head

before starting that I would keep right up all the way if possible, and I did so, although we went into camp with only six or eight men in the company several times.

We reached the vicinity of Goldsboro on the 17th, and, after a pretty lively skirmish, the bridge was set on fire, and we started on the return journey. On the way back there were a great many fires in the pine woods, so that the soldiers said we had set North Carolina on fire and were running away by the light.

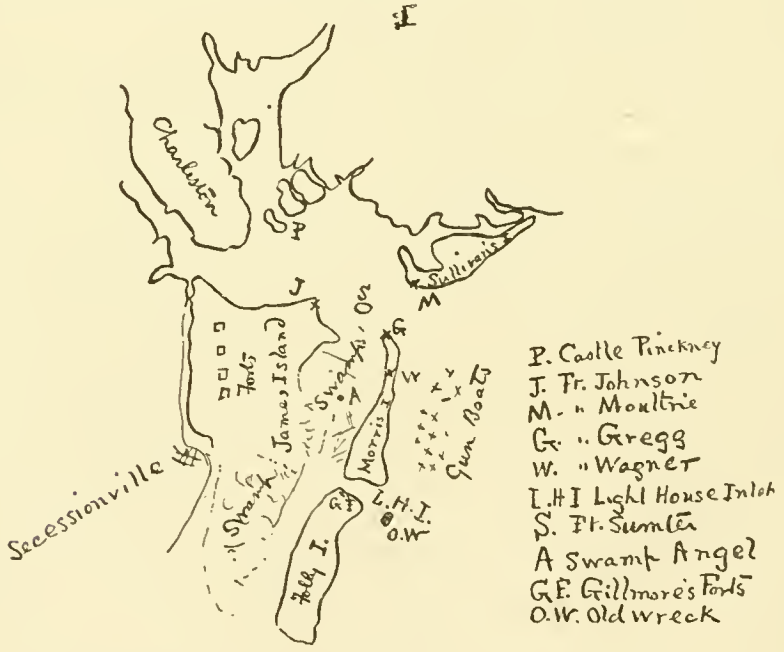
We got back to Newbern just before Christmas, and, for some reason, there was only an inadequate supply of provisions, so that on Christmas morning we had nothing at all to eat. About eleven o'clock some tobacco was served out to us, and about one we had some bread and other food given us.

We stayed in Newbern till the 25th of January [1863], when we went by rail to Beaufort, North Carolina, and took transports for Port Royal, South Carolina. The object was an attack on Charleston, but there was some conflict between General Foster, who went in command of the troops from North Carolina, and General Hunter, commanding those from South Carolina. Pending the settlement of this difficulty we were put on St. Helena Island, where we remained till about the first of April, when we went to Folly Island, near Charleston. The plan was for a combined attack of the Army and Navy upon the forts in front of Charleston. We landed on Folly Island in the night, and marched the greater part of its length (about ten miles, if I remember rightly), and the next day witnessed the attack of the monitors and other men-of-war upon these forts.[1] This attack was not successful, and so we were brought back to about

[1] April 7, 1863.

the middle of the island, where we spent the next two or three months.

General Hunter had been superseded by General Q. A. Gillmore,[1] who at once began active measures for the reduction of the forts in front of Charleston. Forts were secretly built on the extreme head of Folly Island, and here forty-seven guns were mounted before the Confederates, who were only a few hundred yards away across Light House Inlet, suspected what we were doing. Then the troops went up in small boats, surprised those on the lower end of Morris Island,[2] just opposite to our cannon, and so all the island up to Fort Wagner fell into our hands. The accompanying sketch will help somewhat in understanding the situation:



Map of Charleston Harbour

[1] June 12, 1863. [2] July 10, 1863.

We did a large part of the work in building the forts I have mentioned. We did the work in the night; were not allowed to talk aloud lest the Southerners should discover us. As we thus worked for eight consecutive nights before the attack, we did not take part in it—otherwise I might not be here to tell the story. The attack on Fort Wagner[1] was repulsed with great loss, especially among the colored troops. After that the General decided to approach Wagner by "parallels," or zigzag lines of works. This must be done in the night, and three regiments were detailed to hold the short front line —one regiment one night in every three. Ours, having escaped the deadly assault, was put upon this perilous duty,[2] and for quite a while we spent about twenty-six hours out of every seventy-two upon that murderous line.

As can be seen by looking at the sketch, we were under the concentrated fire of many batteries, and it was impossible to protect ourselves. And so it was that we had men killed or wounded every time we went to the front. Our company was at this time so reduced by sickness and by wounds that at one time we had only four non-commissioned officers and two men able for duty. I was one of the four, having been made a corporal on St. Helena,[3] and a sergeant on Folly Island.[4] We could easily see the cannon-balls—some of them coming, and there was usually a man on the lookout, who, when he saw the smoke in the daytime, or the flash at night, would sing out, "Cover, Wagner!", "Cover, Johnson!", as the case might be. Of course we could not see the balls from the rifled cannon, but the mortar-shells and some others could be easily seen. I can hardly

[1] July 18, 1863,—his twentieth birthday. [2] August 20, 1863.
[3] March 1, 1863. [4] Presumably *acting* sergeant, as his warrant is dated November 1, 1863.

believe it myself now, but I remember seeing one of our artillerymen take one of their mortar-shells, which had just come over, put it into one of our mortars and send it back into Fort Wagner. Fellow soldiers in the same rifle-pit were struck again and again; their names, faces, and all the circumstances come back to me as I write. One shell, which dropped twenty or thirty feet away, killed and wounded fourteen men. Our Lieutenant-Colonel Purviance was killed by our own guns a few feet away from me.[1] As they put negroes out on the breastworks at night and largely repaired the damage done to them by our cannon in the daytime, General Gillmore set up a large calcium light which made it as light as day all through the night, so that the repairs were stopped and they were compelled to evacuate. We were on duty the night of the evacuation.[2] I had charge of the signal pistol with directions how to use it in case of a *sortie* from the fort. Fort Gregg was evacuated at the same time, and a few days later I visited it and had the pleasure of standing in the fort from which the first gun of the war was fired.

The shelling of Fort Sumter and the other forts by our gunboats was a magnificent sight—one never to be forgotten.[3] During the siege of Fort Wagner thousands of sandbags were secretly carried out into the swamp toward Charleston, not even we who worked at it knowing the reason why. Here a long range gun was placed, and from this General Gillmore threw balls filled with "Greek Fire" right into the city of Charleston, greatly to the consternation of the inhabitants of that nest of rebellion. This gun was called the "Swamp Angel."[4]

[1] August 30, 1863. [2] September 6, 1863. [3] September 8, 1863.

[4] "A 200-pounder Parrott, which threw shells into the town at the then great range of 8000 yards." *The American Civil War*, by John Formby (New York, 1910), p. 257.

Know Ye,

I do he

Instt. in the

Sixty three He is

of things thereunto

to obedient to his

shall receive from

over him accordin

-ficer of the

Jers

By the C

L

A. G. O No.

believe it myself now, but I remember seeing one of our artillerymen take one of their mortar-shells, which had just come over, put it into one of our mortars and send it back into Fort Wagner. Fellow soldiers in the same rifle-pit were struck again and again; their names, faces, and all the circumstances come back to me as I write. One shell, which dropped twenty or thirty feet away, killed and wounded fourteen men. Our Lieutenant-Colonel Purviance was killed by our own guns a few feet away from me.[1] As they put negroes out on the breastworks at night and largely repaired the damage done to them by our cannon in the daytime, General Gillmore set up a large calcium light which made it as light as day all through the night, so that the repairs were stopped and they were compelled to evacuate. We were on duty the night of the evacuation.[2] I had charge of the signal pistol with directions how to use it in case of a *sortie* from the fort. Fort Gregg was evacuated at the same time, and a few days later I visited it and had the pleasure of standing in the fort from which the first gun of the war was fired.

The shelling of Fort Sumter and the other forts by our gunboats was a magnificent sight—one never to be forgotten.[3] During the siege of Fort Wagner thousands of sandbags were secretly carried out into the swamp toward Charleston, not even we who worked at it knowing the reason why. Here a long range gun was placed, and from this General Gillmore threw balls filled with "Greek Fire" right into the city of Charleston, greatly to the consternation of the inhabitants of that nest of rebellion. This gun was called the "Swamp Angel."[4]

[1] August 30, 1863. [2] September 6, 1863. [3] September 8, 1863.

[4] "A 200-pounder Parrott, which threw shells into the town at the then great range of 8000 yards." *The American Civil War*, by John Formby (New York, 1910), p. 257.

THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE Eighty Sixth REGIMENT OF Penn'a Volunteers

To all who shall see these presents, greeting:

Know Ye. That reposing special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, fidelity and abilities of W. L. Gordon I do hereby appoint him Sergeant in Company G of the 85th Regiment of Penn'a Vols. Infty. in the service of the UNITED STATES, to rank as such from the First day of November one thousand eight hundred and Sixty three. He is therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the duty of Sergeant by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto belonging. And I do strictly charge and require all Non Commissioned Officers and Soldiers under his command to be obedient to his orders as Sergeant. And he is to observe and follow such orders and directions from time to time as he shall receive from me or the future Commanding Officer of the Regiment or other Superior Officers and Non Commissioned Officers set over him according to the rules and discipline of War. This Warrant to continue in force during the pleasure of the Commanding Officer of the Regiment for the time being.

Given under my hand at the Head Quarters of the Regiment at Folly Island S.C. this First day of November in the Year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and Sixty three

By the Commanding Officer
L. Clyde Dowds
1st Lieutenant & Adjutant of the Regiment.

A. G. O. No 103.

John Houston
Capt
Commanding the Regiment

All the forts on Morris Island having been captured, it was no longer possible for Rebel ships to run the blockade and enter Charleston. The capture of Charleston did not, therefore, seem worth the cost that it would entail in men and money, and so most of the troops were sent away.

We went back to Hilton Head, where we spent the winter [1863–64] very pleasantly. Here I was detailed as Acting Sergeant-Major of the regiment,[1] the duties of which office I performed until the following April or May, when our Sergeant-Major returned to the regiment.

My father we left at Suffolk, Virginia, and he was not with us till we were on Morris Island. Several months before that the Colonel asked that he be sent back to the regiment, and an order to that effect was issued from the War Department. Just at that time, however, the Confederate General, Longstreet, moved upon Suffolk with quite a large force and made several severe attacks on the city, so my father could not get away. Then the Medical Director wrote a letter to the Secretary of War urging that, as Lieutenant Gordon was admirably fitted for his position, he be allowed to remain. He was, therefore, allowed to remain, but was at last relieved of his command there and sent back to the regiment. In the meantime he had been reported as "absent without leave," and soon after his return he was tried by Court Martial. Owing partly to the fact that some of his witnesses failed to come and partly to personal influence, he was found guilty, and would, I suppose, have been dishonorably discharged from the service. The papers went up to General Q. A. Gillmore, the Commander of the Department, an officer of the reg-

[1] January 20, 1864.

ular army, who at once saw the injustice done my father, disapproved of the findings of the Court Martial, and forwarded his disapproval to the President.[1] President Lincoln took the same view as General Gillmore, and ordered "that Lieut. Gordon be returned to his command without loss of pay or allowances." This was not, however, until May [1864], when we were in front of Petersburg, Virginia.

To go back. While we were at Hilton Head, we went on an expedition to White Marsh Island, near Savannah, Georgia, going by way of Fort Pulaski. We attacked the Rebels in quite a lively manner and they responded in an even more lively fashion, so that we were very glad to get away with a very few wounded and one or two taken prisoners,—one of them Billy, the Colonel's cook. The tide was out and our steamer was for quite a while aground and really at the mercy of the enemy. Luckily, however, they didn't know it, so we got off safely at last. While at Hilton Head, Eli Crumrine, a fifer in Company B, and I sent for Upham's "Mental Philosophy" and studied it for a while, reciting to my father.

In the early spring[2] we were sent north to take part in the great advance against Richmond. We were sent to Gloucester Point, opposite Yorktown, and became a part of General W. F. Smith's Division of the Army of the James, which was commanded by Major-General Butler. In company with the rest of the Army of the James, we ascended the James River on transports early in May, and landed at Bermuda Hundred, just above the mouth of the Appomattox.

[1] The Judge Advocate of the Department of the South at this period was the late John Chipman Gray, of Boston, who wrote on February 4, 1912: "My duty was to revise Court Martial Records. . . . I think it highly probable that Gillmore consulted me about your grandfather's case."

[2] April 22, 1864.

Head Quarters 85th Regt
Hilton Head S.C.
January 29th 1864

Special Order
No 29

Sergeant Gordon of Co "G"
is announced as acting Sergeant
Major of the Regiment and will
be obeyed and respected accordingly.

By order of
Capt. Abrahams
Com'd Regt.

Official
L. Colyer Jr 2nd Lt
1st Lieut & Adjutant

After landing, we marched out toward the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad, some of our troops even crossing the road. Our regiment, however, was stopped near the James, opposite Dutch Gap. The Rebels were greatly troubled by this move and strong reënforcements were sent to their army. Our troops, which had advanced to Drury's Bluff, were driven back with considerable loss of life. Our regiment being on picket when this advance was made, was not in the battle. We were, however, in easy hearing distance of the heavy musketry firing. This was on the 16th of May, I think.

On the 20th of May, the Rebels came down in strong force and tried to drive us from our line. Our regiment was sent to hold a weak part of the line. Here we had the hardest direct fighting of my whole experience. They advanced within a hundred yards of us determined to drive us, but we were as determined to hold our ground. I here shot so fast as to make my gun-barrel so hot that it was uncomfortable to hold — the only time I ever had such an experience. Corporal George Kinney was killed at my side, as were some others of our company, but the enemy for the most part fired over our heads. One of their brigadier-generals was captured by our brigade.[1]

For some time after this we had almost daily fights over the line of rifle-pits in front of the camp. One day they would drive us away and throw up the earth from their side; the next morning we would surprise them and use the same set of tools to throw up the earth from our side of the same rifle-pit. By and by they became convinced that they could not move us, and General Butler unfortunately could not advance; so we settled down and became quite friendly, exchanging newspapers, etc. Part of the line was in an open field, and we

[1] Brigadier-General Walker. See page 72.

dug deep holes—"gopher-holes"—where we lay all day, not daring to stick our heads up, always going in and coming out in the dark. Here we were through June and into July, when I was taken quite sick and sent to the hospital at Point of Rocks, on the Appomattox. This seemed pretty hard on me, but was really a very fortunate thing, as about the middle of July our regiment, with other troops, were sent north of the James to Deep Bottom,[1] where they suffered perhaps the heaviest loss of the war. Quite a number of my personal friends were killed or mortally wounded. My father, who was with the regiment then, fortunately escaped unhurt.

I recovered and returned to the regiment in August, and not long after we were taken across the Appomattox to the front of Petersburg. We were right in front of the mine that had been exploded a few weeks before. Here firing was going on almost all the time, day and night. Our camp was in easy range of the enemy's guns. One day I was standing in camp, talking to a friend named Myers Titus, when a cannon-ball came over, struck in a tent near us, where "Skeety" Atkinson was writing, cut his right arm off near the shoulder, and passed on between my friend and me as we were talking.

We were much on the front line here, and the firing was almost continuous. At about nine o'clock every morning, however, some one on either side would wave a newspaper or something white, and, when this was recognized on the other side, the firing would cease, and perhaps fifty soldiers from each side would jump over the lines and meet together in the little valley between, where they would talk and laugh in the friendliest way, exchange newspapers, coffee

[1] August 13, 1864.

Sergeant M. S. Gordon
November, 1864

for tobacco, etc. After twenty minutes or half an hour we would separate, and almost immediately the firing would begin again.

In September we went north of the James again, surprised the enemy above Deep Bottom, took their breastworks, and went on very near to Richmond, nearer, I think, than troops had been before. In the evening we withdrew to a cross-road and threw up rifle-pits. Here we were violently attacked by the enemy, but they were repulsed with heavy loss. The next day, or at least soon afterwards, we attacked again and had some severe fighting, in which the soldier I have just spoken of [Titus] was wounded. I helped him to an ambulance while the battle was going on. The wound did not seem serious, and he said if we got off as easily as he had, we would be fortunate. A few days later he died of the wound, which had become gangrenous.[1]

This was our very last day of fighting. Our time having expired, we were sent to Norfolk, Virginia, for a while, on police duty, while my father and many other officers were detailed to go to Charleston, South Carolina, with prisoners for exchange. We were sent to Pittsburgh in November [1864], and were mustered out of the service.[2] We reached Waynesburg on Thanksgiving Day,[3] and I reëntered college immediately and joined the church at the first Communion Service.

[1] Sergeant Myers P. Titus died at Hampton, Virginia, October, 1864, of wounds received in action.

[2] November 22, 1864.

[3] November 24, 1864, — Co. G in charge of M. L. Gordon.

LETTERS

Suffolk Va. Oct. 5th /62

Dear Uncle,[1]

I WROTE you a letter three or four weeks ago, but as yet have received no answer. We have not had a word from [home] for more than three weeks. What can be the reason? I hope nothing unusual has taken place!

We are still encamped near Suffolk with little prospect of leaving soon, unless to make an advance on Petersburg, which will not be made, I think for several weeks at *least*, but I should not be surprised if it were made before long as we are being heavily reinforced.

Our Brigade made a "reconnoisance in force" a day or two ago —started out on Friday and returned late last night. The 103d Regiment P. V. (which was on *our* left) with a Battery of Parrott guns engaged the Rebels some six miles this side of Black Water and shelled them from their position. Rebel loss unknown—ours three killed and seven wounded by a shell. The Party then returned without effecting anything else except supplying us with Sweet Potatoes, apples &c. &c.

Papa is quite unwell, has been so for several days—is a shade better today. I still continue in excellent health—although I do not look quite so well in the *face* I think I am heavier than when I left Greene Co. Tom Knisely is sick in the Hospital, they are talking of sending him *North*. George Knisely and Owen Pitcock are both unwell. Will Pitcock is almost well again.

Our Regiment has not been paid for more than three *months. I*

[1] William Gordon, born March 10, 1833.

have not received any pay for more than five months, consequently my *funds* are getting rather *low*. Uncle Godfrey[1] still owes me a balance on that school order he got of me eighteen months ago. If he is at home I would be very much obliged if you, or Uncle Bazzel[2] if you would mention it to *him*. I do dislike to ask him for it, but *he* can do without it, while I *cannot* very well. The Order was for twenty dollars, and he has paid me $11.50 consequently there remains $8.50 *due*. But if he is not at home, don't put yourself to any trouble about it as I can get along very well without it, for a while at least.

Give my *love* to all the folks, especially when you go to R——e

Write soon Direct as usual

M Lafayette Gordon
Peck's Div Co G 85 P. V.
Washington D. C.

Wm Gordon

Suffolk Va Nov. 17th 1862

Dear Uncle,

I RECEIVED a short letter from you several days ago, but have been so busy fixing up our tent that I have had no time for letter-writing. We got logs and built a pen the size of our tent, about 4 ft high, and put our tent on top. We have a brick fire place in our tent and as the chimney draws very well, we can make ourselves quite comfortable these cool evenings. Indeed! if we get to occupy these quarters all winter we will be as comfortable (in body) as if we were at home.

It has been q[ui]te cool here the past two weeks. We had quite a snow about a week since, and a few days of real November weather,

[1] Godfrey Gordon, born October 18, 1820.

[2] Bazel Gordon, born December 27, 1822.

but it is warm again now and today it is quite pleasant without fire.

I hope you all succeeded in weathering the storm up there but am afraid you had rather a serious time of it, but I hope you did not expose yourself. I deeply regret the condition in which you are placed, but am (as you know) powerless as far as aiding you is concerned. The prospect of either of us getting home is to my mind anything but flattering. There is some talk of our Capt. being appointed Major, and in that event I suppose Pa. would become Captain although he prefers his present position. I do not know how it will turn out.

Papa is out now with the ambulances. Quite a large party went out in the direction of Blackwater today—they took three days rations. From some cause our Regiment was left behind, but Pa. went with the fifteen Amb^{l}^{c}^{s} They may "see snakes" before they return heavy cannonading has been heard in that direction several times today.

I suppose you have heard of Tom Knisely's death He died near a week ago. His "Discharge Papers" were received a day or two ago but he did not need them.

Will Pitcock is looking for his "papers" every day. I hope he may get them soon Davy Graham, will I think be discharged also I was very sick week before last and part of last week, another attack of Fever. Am doing duty again.

The soldiers were very indignant at the removal of M'Clellan, indeed no act of the A[dm]inistration has met with such universal condemnation. M'Clellan was never so popular as now I have myself sometimes thought he was a little Slow, but you nor I never dreamed of the *extent to which opposition to his plans was carried.* An hour's reading from a pamphlet by *Prince de Joinville* M'Clellan's French Aid has given me more insight into the Peninsular Cam-

paign than I had ever gained before. The Authorities at Washington gave him *repeated promises* of AID *promises* which *they never intended to fulfil* and *which* were *only* GIVEN that *M'Clellan might* be *disappointed.* M'Dowell's whole Corps was promised to assist in the taking of Yorktown, even after we had arrived on the Peninsula. The breaking of this promise caused the delay of a regular *Seige*, and yet they joined in the cry of *inactivity*. Shame on them.

Please write at your convenience

Yours M LAFAYETTE GORDON

Pa wrote to Fortress Monroe for that letter but has not as yet received it LAFAY.

Camp near Newbern N. C. Jan 23d 1863

MY DEAR UNCLE

I RECEIVED a letter from you two or three weeks ago and wrote you about the Same time, but as the mail is so irregular I will write again, hoping that you will *return* the *compliment.*

As I gave you a pretty full account of our expedition in my last it will be useless for me to refer to it in this; yet there were many things transpired on our trip that if I could see you I would like to tell you, but which would require too much paper to write I must, therefore, wait until I go home. You will See that Gen Foster in his Official Report gives our Reg't & Brigade more credit than did the correspondents of the Newspapers. After we came back Gen Wessel was made a General of Division and Col. Hunt (92 N Y) was put in command of our old Brigade Col. Howell was made Acting Brigadier (though for *what* wonderful *feats* of daring I do not know) and we were *transferred* and are now in "Howell's Bri-

gade." I was loth to leave our Boys in the old Brigade and we were all sorry to leave old "Wes." but the worst disappointed when we heard that we would be under Howell. It takes a good while to become acquainted with such a person as the Col. and I am very sorry that he has got among Gen's who do not know him so well as old Wessel did. He ran this Reg't enough when its Col. and I'm afraid it will be worse now. There is an expedition about to leave this place and Beaufort, for it is supposed Wilmington or Charleston, and it was intended that our Regiment should remain, but the Col. has, I learn, got *permission* to go along. While we are far from fearing to expose ourselves when our *Country* demands it, we think it unfair that a Reg't which has seen as much *hard service* as ours, and which has not been paid for nearly Seven months, should constantly run into everything, while others whose service has been a mere burlesque should be left in *comfortable Barracks*.

Str. Ranger Jan. 27th

We are off Beaufort and the expedition is nearly ready to start. It is a very large one I counted near eighty sail in the Harbor this morn. I think our destination is Charleston or *farther*. You may expect strange news from us soon. Write to Pa I may not have an opportunity to do so.

Give my love to all the folks. Tell the friends of our Boys it may be some time before they have an opportunity to write

As ever M Lafayette Gordon

P.S. I will get this franked as I have only one or two Stamps

L

Port Royal S. C. March 14th [1863]

DEAR UNCLE

IT is with pleasure that I acknowledge receipt of your letter of Feb 22d.

As you do not mention the receipt of but one from me, you must have written in answer to some I have written since leaving Suffolk. This is the first one I have received from you since one dated Dec. 6th I have written to you often, oftener perhaps than to any other person but I believe all of my letters did not reach you. We are still lying on St. Helena and are getting along after the same old fashion.

As you intimated we have been knocked around a good deal. We have been (comparatively speaking) everywhere. Have seen all kinds of people, from almost every nation on earth, have marched twice the length of that terrible Peninsula,—have waded the most dismal of the Carolinas' swamps, have been engaged in ten or a dozen sanguinary conflicts, in short we have seen the *Elephant* in all his glory; and felt the Earth quake beneath his mighty tread.

A good part of the time when enduring the hardest privations, we have been cheered with the thought that we were striving to perpetuate that Government which was established by our forefathers, and for which a Washington a Greene a Marion, a Lafayette tendered their lives, and at whose shrine the lives of Warren De Kalb Pulaski and thousands others less noted but no less brave were offered up. But in these latter days when Ambition and lust rules the day there is little to comfort the common Soldier and true patriot. We cannot look out on the dread future with anything like hopefulness, and as we are powerless to do anything toward asserting

Pennsylva

A. G. Curt

Know Ye Thr

Having been duly

THE Eighth

Mustered into the
made as such from
He is therefore emp
all manner of thing
annulled.

day of October

By

Port Royal S. C. March 14th [1863]

DEAR UNCLE

IT is with pleasure that I acknowledge receipt of your letter of Feb 22d.

As you do not mention the receipt of but one from me, you must have written in answer to some I have written since leaving Suffolk. This is the first one I have received from you since one dated Dec. 6th I have written to you often, oftener perhaps than to any other person but I believe all of my letters did not reach you. We are still lying on St. Helena and are getting along after the same old fashion.

As you intimated we have been knocked around a good deal. We have been (comparatively speaking) everywhere. Have seen all kinds of people, from almost every nation on earth, have marched twice the length of that terrible Peninsula,—have waded the most dismal of the Carolinas' swamps, have been engaged in ten or a dozen sanguinary conflicts, in short we have seen the *Elephant* in all his glory; and felt the Earth quake beneath his mighty tread.

A good part of the time when enduring the hardest privations, we have been cheered with the thought that we were striving to perpetuate that Government which was established by our forefathers, and for which a Washington a Greene a Marion, a Lafayette tendered their lives, and at whose shrine the lives of Warren De Kalb Pulaski and thousands others less noted but no less brave were offered up. But in these latter days when Ambition and lust rules the day there is little to comfort the common Soldier and true patriot. We cannot look out on the dread future with anything like hopefulness, and as we are powerless to do anything toward asserting

Pennsylvania, ss:

A. G. Curtin

In the Name & by the Authority of the

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

ANDREW G. CURTIN

GOVERNOR OF THE SAID COMMONWEALTH.

To all to whom these Presents shall Come, Greeting:

Know Ye That John A Gordon of the County of Irene

Having been duly appointed by me, the said (Andrew G. Curtin,) CAPTAIN, of Co. "G" of

THE Eighty fifth REGIMENT INFANTRY, PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS.

Mustered into the service of the United States, for the defence of the General Government, (On Commission) Since to rank as such from the Eighth day of September Anno Domini one thousand eight hundred and sixty four

He is therefore carefully and diligently to discharge the duty of CAPTAIN, by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto belonging. This Commission to continue in force until the same shall be lawfully determined or annulled.

Given under my Hand and the Great Seal of the State, at Harrisburg this Tenth day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty four and of the Commonwealth the eighty ninth

By the Governor:

Secretary of the Commonwealth.

our rights we can only do our duty, and trust that He who holds the destinies of nations in his hands will bring Order out of confusion. The President and his officials are vested with almost unlimited power and it is for you at the North who are not *sworn* to obey him to see that he wields it for good rather than evil.

I believe the fate of this Country rests outside the army for the great part with the loyal Democracy of the nation. *They* should look well to her interests. Everything that tends to promote her happiness should be nurtured with a watchful eye and careful hand.

No matter what the *other* party does the Democracy should be for the *Country*. They should come out as they did in the days of Buchanan's Treachery.

I do not agree with those persons who call themselves *Democrats* whose only aim is to parylyze the *efforts* of the Government.

This is not Lincoln's Gov't! We are not fighting for his *administration* and further if our Gov't does fall to pieces, we will not on *any* conditions submit to Jeff Davis.

We are laboring for the restoration of a *Union* bought by the blood of freeman, for our Homes—for all that makes life dear. The course of the President has been to totally annihilate any Union feeling in the South (whether intended or not) and to destroy confidence in the North. He has adopted measures which *we* believe ruinous, yet for *his misdeeds* shall we desert our *Country* [?] While we (being powerless) differ with him in regard to the means, let us not forget that we have as great a birthright as any man be his station ever so high.

I say this because they are my [h]onest sentiments, not that I would want to make any one believe them.

We had been thinking for some time that we had drilled in everything but the past week we have had "something new under the sun." We drill in getting on and off Transports. A Reg't is taken on board & then put in small boats they are then formed in line and all strike for the shore—the moment the boats touch the men spring out fix bayonets and make a charge. It is a good deal of fun, but we *may* see they [*sic*] the day when it will not be quite so amusing.

The Boys are in comparative health Will Graham has been unwell for some time but is better now. The weather is very warm. We scarcely ever have so warm a day in Penna as yesterday was. But this letter is already twice the length I intended it I will therefore close

Give my best respects to all my friends Write soon

Affectionately

M. Lafayette Gordon

William Gordon

Folly Island S. C. May 21st 1863

Dear Uncle

I HAVE been looking for a letter from you for a long time but have been disappointed. I wrote to you soon after we arrived on this Island and once I believe before we left St Helena. I received a letter from home a few days since that said that Davy Martin had written home that I was in the Hospital, and our Orderly Sergt. received a letter from Papa yesterday inquiring if the rumor was correct. I cannot imagine how Davy got such news, and am of the opinion that it is a creature of his very *fertile* imagination. My health since I left Suffolk last fall has been most excellent, nothing greater

to disturb me at any time than a slight cold ended with a severe head-ache. As far as Davy is concerned he has not been with the Regt for six months and consequently has had no opportunities of knowing even if I had been sick. I feel just as well this morning as I ever did in my life although we are in this sickly, southern climate. I hope you haven't been sufficiently alarmed about my health this time to set you to running through the rain and mud to all my "Ladye" correspondents. I'm afraid if you do there will be more than one tell you that they haven't received anything from me since Feb. or even before that.

Seriously however I hope you will have no cause for anxiety for me, although knowing how liable I am to fever, I'm a little afraid of what this summer may bring forth. I hope however my [*sic*] strict attention to the laws of health, cleanliness, with a *clear* conscience, and the Divine blessing, to get safely through it.

We have been very anxious since the last Steamer came in about the success of our Army in Va. We have northern news up to the 9th inst when Hooker had re-re-crossed the river, and as we are entirely destitute of getting any more authentic information, there are a thousand-and-one rumors afloat, some accrediting Hooker with success, while others give him defeat. *I* am inclined to think he has been successful as the Rebels in our front have been very undemonstrative the past week. I think our men here have made a great mistake in not making at least a feint here to prevent them from sending reinforcements to Lee. This is always the case. Our Generals seem to lack that adaptation of things to circumstances that the Rebels possess. But I hope that it is all right, but if it is our Generals here can give themselves very little credit for it.

Our boys had a great time after the arrival of the last mail, laughing over the scare some of the people in Greene Co. had at the time of the threatened invasion by the Rebels, although, I suspect, it was no laughing matter then. *We laugh* at everything here. You wouldn't believe that anyone could make light of some of the scenes of which we are the witnesses. The roughest jokes I ever heard in my life were perpetrated under a heavy fire. But really I think there were some men who should have shown more pluck than to run of[f] with their horses & cattle and leave their wives and Children in the hands of a merciless, vagabond band of guerillas. A few men, with their trusty rifles, by stationing themselves in the woods along the road could have made them halt long before they did.

The weather is very warm, but we have little active duty to perform. We still drill about ½ hour in the morning, this with our guard duty completes our duties for the day. If each of us had a little wife to grace our tents and a little better *grub*, we could live like Princes.

I suppose by this time our Chaplain has reached Penn. and delivered the money in his charge. Did mine arrive safely? I sent sixty dollars by him. It is rumored that we will be paid again soon. I do not know whether it is true or not. I have to spend a good deal here, more than I like. Our rations are very plain merely crackers & meat and a few other things (Beans in this climate are enough to kill a person) and when a fellow has to sit down day after day to a piece of corn-beef and a cracker as hard as a bone they soon become distasteful, and when he has an opportunity to get a few Potatoes, a roll of butter head of cabbage or a little light bread he is generally inclined to do it even if it does cost him something, or at least that's my *fix*.

Everything is quiet here now. The rebels opposite tried a few days since to shell us out of our Camp but as we have guns here that reach about as far again as theirs they soon got tired of it.

The (in sight of us) Blockading fleet capture a schooner every day. The Ironsides is still out in front of the bar, looking liking [*sic*] like a huge fort in the sea. Give my love to all your family, Becky[1] & all the rest. Write soon Direct your letters to Hilton Head (Via N. Y.)

Affectionately

M. Lafay. Gordon

William Gordon

North p't Folly Island July 18th '63

Dear Uncle

As I intimated, in my last we are again on the offensive. On Friday the 10th our Batteries here opened on the Rebels and with the aid of Infantry succeeded in driving the Rebs & occupying about one half of Morris Island. We took two hundred prisoners, and several large guns, including one English [Whitworth?] gun. The Rebels yet hold Fort Wagoner, but we are getting some heavy guns in position which with the aid of the Gun Boats will make her show the white feather. Indeed I think the reduction of Charleston is but a question of time. Gen. Gilmore appears to be a good General he has managed this thing very well. He had his batteries on this Island completed before the Rebels knew anything of it. I think the attack will be renewed by Monday. We are however having shelling all the time but it is just to keep the Rebs in hot water.

[1] The writer's sister, Rebecca (Gordon) West, born March 31, 1853.

Our Regt has not been engaged yet and may not be at all. We were engaged on the fortifications until they were completed and then were on Picket and lastly were brought here to transport stores from here to Morris Island.

We have been very much cheered by the news from Vicksburg and from Pa. and hope ere long to add Charleston to the list of Victories. Hookers [*sic*] did not have quite so much trouble & hard swearing to do to get out of command of the Army as he had to get into it. "*Vive le*" Meade.

I will write you again in a few days and give you a better account of our campaign.

Hoping to hear from you soon I am &c

LAFY GORDON.

Morris Island, S. C. July 25th 1863.

DEAR UNCLE

AS you may be somewhat anxious to hear from me during the present campaign I concluded this morning to drop you a line. I am tolerably well,—doing duty in this hot weather, and then being out in the heavy dews is enough to kill us all, but most of the boys are putting it through bravely. I have had several small boils on my left foot, and have to take it barefooted. I wrote you just a week ago—we were then on Folly Island, and I expected we would remain there, but our forces attempted to take Fort "Wagner" by storm and were repulsed with heavy loss. Consequently we were brought to the front. We now hold about three fourths of Morris Island,—the Rebels being strongly fortified in the remaining portion. Morris Island is a poorer one yet than Folly, but is splend[idly]

adapted for defensive operations. All along the coast there are bluffs, fifty feet in height and on the tops of these the Rebels had dug out holes and placed their Guns in them on complete pivots, so that there was a *natural embankment* all round them, except a small aperture to go in at. It was these batteries that gave the Monitors that terrible "cross fire" last April.

We are now preparing to give the Rebels shells, instead of the lives of our men We have heavy batteries, within rifle shot of Wagner. Have now a goodly number of Mortars, Parrott guns &c mounted and will soon be ready to give Sumter some two hundred pounders. We have shelling going on all the time. The rebels are trying to shell our camp today, and even as I write some shells from Fort Johnson are bursting within a few hundred yards of me. Our fleet gave [——?] quite a spirited shelling yesterday forenoon and they run a boat out under a Flag of Truce with the pretence of affecting an exchange of Prisoners, but I guess it was getting rather warm for them.

There is a great diversity of opinion among the Soldiers in regard to the ultimate fall of Charleston, but I think if our forces are handled rightly we will come out all right. Time will tell however.

I sent to N York some time since for a watch expecting it to be a capped one but it turned out to be an opened faced one and was considerably damaged in coming. As it will be difficult to get it repaired here I concluded to send it to you, let you get it repaired and do the best you can with it. It cost me $7.00

I believe I have nothing more to write at present & will close by sending my best wishes to you all.

M. L. Gordon

Tuesday 28th

We were ordered out into the trenches soon after I had written the foregoing, and did not get to send it off, so I will fill the sheet. We were out from Sat. till Sunday night, the Rebels shelling us all the time. The shells lit on all sides of us burst over our heads, sometimes covering us with mud &c. &c. This with an occasional ball from the "Reb" Sharpshooters made our position anything but an enviable one. Our men are still getting more heavy guns up, and the regular fighting not [to] come off for several days yet. I am still in tolerable health, but had quite a severe attack of Cholera Morbus night before last. I have not heard from Pa for some time. I am at a loss to divine the reason. It has also been a good while since I heard from home. Assure all the folks of my loving regard for them and believe me your friend & nephew

M. Lafayette Gordon

Morris Island S. C. Aug. 11th '63.

My dear Uncle

YOUR letter of the 28th of July was received two or three days since and one from home came to hand today.

I am thankful indeed for the promptness you manifested in forwarding that Box. I can never repay my friends for their kindness, except by a grateful heart.

The Box has not arrived yet but I expect to get it in a few days. I understand there is a load of Express Boxes at the wharf now. You have no idea how fruit sells here. Cans of Peaches, Tomatoes Plums &c the size of the Cans we use at home sell at $1.50 to $2.00. Smaller cans holding less than a quart $1.00. Onions $8.00 pr. Bar-

rel. Melons 18 inches long $2.00 &c. &c. You see what it costs to *live*. I can add that we can't get anything scarcely at that price.

Our Co. met with another misfortune on Sunday last. Josh Thomas was severely wounded in the left side of the neck and shoulder, by a piece of Shell. It came very near cutting the jugular vein. I was afraid at first that it might prove fatal but I think now there is every probability of his speedy recovery. I wrote to his folks yesterday noon. If you have a chance tell them that today he is *much* better & has all the care & comforts of home. I was with [him] all night *Sunday*. Away in the night Miss Barton (who is the Florence Nightingale of this Department) came in and went round among the wounded, talking to them in such a *nice* way, that I could hardly repress the mental "God bless you!" that came to my lips, and if I had followed the prompting of my heart would have went up & *kissed her* right there *before them all!* Oh! these women! What enigmas they are! Here they are light-hearted, careless creatures, caring for nothing, nor nobody, and the perpetual torment of the men generally, and again we find them forsaking the comforts and luxuries of home to sooth & comfort him, and to watch over him in his affliction with angelic tenderness.

But enough of this sentimentalism, or you will begin to think me love-sick and will prescribe a "dose of ears & tail &c &c."

[*The first part of the following letter is missing*]

[August (— ?), 1863]

. . . let things be right or wrong. For my part I should as lief keep my boots well blackened as otherwise, especially when the blacking is found me. I am enjoying myself pretty well, indeed I do not know

that I ever done better since I have been in the service. Feeling that I am doing my duty I can reconcile my exile from my friends as a part of that duty, and bear it cheerfully. But I assure you that as soon as this Rebellion is crushed, none shall be more anxious to return to peaceful pursuits than myself.

We are still knocking away at Sumter, every day. She is literally a heap of ruins, and I am at a loss to know how men can remain in her, with those huge shells lighting on every portion of it. You will see by the Papers that one single shell killed 13 men all citizens of Charleston. We all recollect the rejoicing in that City after their disgraceful assault on Andersen, truly their "rejoicing is turned into sorrow." The Boys are generally well and in good spirits.

I believe I will close as it is after Taps Write soon

Your Bro

M. L. Gordon

Jno. C. Gordon[1]

Pa says he was not surprised to hear so good an account of that lamb knowing the good qualities of its mother.

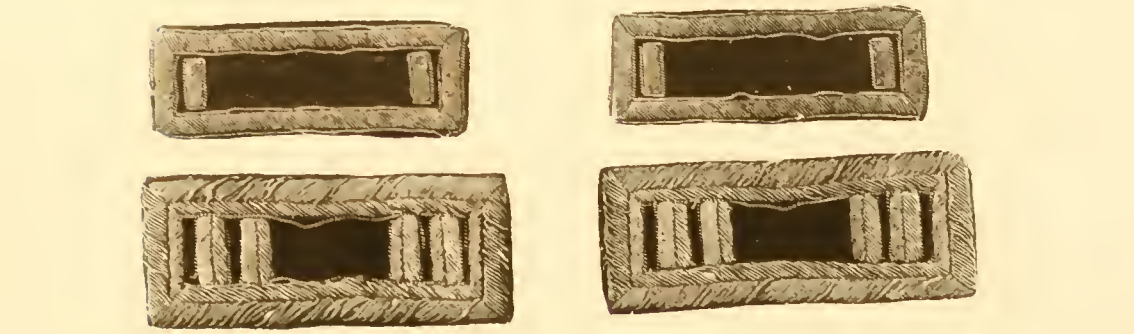
Black Island S. C. Oct 22 1863

My Dear Uncle.

YOURS of the 2d inst was received a few days since and I am compelled to recognize the fact that there is a "discrepency" of opinion between us in regard to several important questions. I hope however that in regard to putting down this rebellion and establishing the honor of our Flag through the length and breadth of this great Country, if needs be, by force of arms, we are of similar

[1] The writer's brother, John Crawford Gordon, born May 14, 1846.

John L. Gordons Shoulder Straps



M. L. Gordons Cap Strap

opinions, and that the difference is one of *policy* only and does not extend to the vital question,—that this Government must be sustained. As you have refered to the question at length, I will make a brief review of it, giving you my views, for what they are worth, not having the vanity [to] suppose that I can influence yours. To begin: I am not certain that I did, or did not send word to you to vote for Gov. Curtin, but I was very anxious for his re-election and for the defeat of Woodward and Vallandigham. You must confess that the antecedents of the men who are managing Woodward[']s campaign, are not of the most flattering character. They are princip[al]ly the old Buchanan "whippers in," and the pliant tools of the Southern Conspirators.

Weak kneed Bigler, The R. R. Glancy Jones, Searight &c &c. The Serpent himself is dead, but the body (Bigler, Hughes, Welch & Co.) and the tail (Searight, Gilmore Crawford & Waddell) still keeps up a wriggling, but will end as soon as the Sun of rebellion disappears behind the bulwark of Loyalty. These are the men whom Woodward says do not allow him to "discuss the political questions of the day" I want more evidence of his loyalty! Gov. Curtin by both word and deed has defined his position, and while he has not advocated any radical measures has been unswerving in his loyalty. Would you have him pursue the course recommended by your patriotic representative in the Legislature? Withdraw the support of Penna [?] The Soldiers, although they long for the return of peace, would call it an insult. In regard to the confiscation act and to Arming the Negroes, and to other acts of the administration, I was opposed to many if not all of them but a close observation of the progress of the war has convinced me that in some instances I was

wrong. Have Tratiors any rights under the Constitution? I say *no!* I believe in using every dollar, every article of property in putting down rebellion, and if we can use those chattels best by putting musketts in their hands, that is the way to use them. I do not hesitate in such a matter out of any love I bear these murderers of my brethren! but simply to enquire if it will help *our* cause!

You say that under our present policy there will be rebellion while a Southerner lives. Don't they reject any terms that tend to a reconstruction of the Union [?] Can we offer them better terms and better rights than they had when they seceded? Have they not had the opportunity of returning to their allegiance at *any* time since the breaking out of the war? They also had eighteen months to repent their folly, and could then have returned and have retained their property as loyal men! These are undeniable facts, and if under this system a southerner will be a Rebel while he lives why for the benefit of humanity for the honor of our country, the sooner he is dead, the better say I. He brings the curse on his own head.

[*The last part of this letter is missing*]

Hilton Head S. C. Jan 9th 1864

Dear Uncle

YOURS of Dec. 20th was received a few days since, and received its usual welcome. And tonight drawing up to the fire I will in something like "double quick" pen you a few lines. It is quite cool tonight, and reminds one very sensibly of some of the winter nights in the olden time when we gathered around the huge fireplace, or cheerful grate, enjoying the society of those we loved, and in blissful ignorance of *War* and its inevitable privations and horrors.

But those "good old times" have passed away never — never to return and a "new order" of things presents itself.

Our country once the pride of her people, the Star of Hope to the oppressed and the wonder of the world is now by the machinations of wicked conspirators plunged into civil war, her government is tottering in its seat, our homes desolated, and our fertile valleys peopled with the dead

Yet amid all this we have great cause to be thankfull. We are placed in a, comparatively speaking, pleasant situation and through this great struggle He has thus far preserved our family circle unbroken.

The weather is very changeable here. One day it is raining the next it is cold and the third it is as pleasant as May with you. We have had a preponderence of rain lately, but it is clear & cold to-day. We never have any mud, within a few hours from the time it ceases to rain the ground is dry.

The boys are driving along at the same old rate, drilling a little and standing guard, getting wood &c. Health is generally good. Three from Comp. G have enlisted in the Veteran Corps, Lindsay Black among them. There are not many re-enlisting from our Regiment, but some regts will send nearly all their men. This is adding great strength to the Govt. indeed. They are as a general thing worth a half dozen Regts of conscripts.

A man may be well drilled but it takes experience *under fire* to make him a *Veteran*.

You appear to misunderstand me in regard to politics. I do not require it as an evidence of a man's loyalty that he must support Mr Lincoln's P——ns, and I will not call a man a traitor who *does*

support them. We want this Rebellion put down, and I'm in for the safest, quickest and *surest* method of doing it.

The "Messenger" has been all along applauding the deeds of the Copperheads, called Vallandigham's address to the people of Ohio "noble & patriotic" Yet we heard of no democrat demurring. Crawford & Waddell stumped the county making *Val.* a martyr, an exiled patriot, and [Lincoln?] equal to an Austrian Emperor. Their meetings were published as enthusiastic

Do Waddell & Crawford and the Messenger represent the feelings of the Greene Co Democracy? I believe it not, and yet, their silence would seem to indicate as much. I have little regard for Hopkins The man who could confess in the Legislature that he supported a Bill he *knew* to be wrong, because he had not courage enough to face the party, can have little confidence from me. I fully agree with you that the Widow who yields her Husband to the Country is as deserving as any, let them be ever so much exalted. We have the evidence of a prominent citizen of Philadelphia that Judge Woodward said soon after Gettysburg that this was a "war of factions in which he could have little interest ["] Does the man who entertains these sentiments deserve the support of a man who has seen his best friends cut down by his side [?] I have scratched down a few thought[s] hurriedly to express my dissent with the course of the Democracy as interpreted by Waddell & Co Take them for what they are worth

My love to all,

M. L. Gordon

Hilton Head S. C. Jan. 25th 1864

My Dear Uncle:

HAVING a few leisure moments, this morning I have concluded to devote them to you. I am writing to you so often that I shouldn't wonder if you are becoming to dread the receipt of a letter addressed in my hand, but I hope that my constant desire to hear from you will be a sufficient apology for the present intrusion, if intrusion it proves to be.

We are still encamped near Hilton Head, and are surrounded with an unusual amount of the comforts of life. Good quarters, good grub, and comparatively little to do. Then too we are blessed with most delightful weather. You at the North *never* have such weather unless in the early part of June or in Indian Summer. It is just warm enough to be pleasant in day-time, and the nights just right for sleeping. The residents of the Island are already planting Potatoes &c and yesterday I saw some of the "free Americans of African descent" out in white pants etc. I never was in better health in my life Truly I should be thankful that the "lines have fallen to me in such pleasant places," and should by my life show my gratitude for his numerous blessings.

Nothing has occurred, of late to disturb the usual monotony of Camp life. The usual amount of drill, guard, and other duties being the routine from day to day! Some of the "Shoulder Strap" men are having fine times. Many of them have their wives with them, and others in my opinion have brought on a few of those estimable Ladies who reside in the "fancy" houses in Baltimore and other Cities. Quite a party came out from the Head a few evenings since to serenade Col Howell bringing with them the Post Band. Hearing the

Music, I with one or two others walked up to Headquarters and were surprised to find so large a party. There were about 45 Gentlemen (officers) and perhaps half as many of of [*sic*] the opposite Sex. I *tell* you they cut a *dash*. I never Saw women with less of that "maidenly modesty" which makes their sex so attractive. They sung "John Brown" B-a Ba Baby ba ba ba, and danced around through the miscellaneous crowd in every direction. I was perfectly disgusted, and came away thanking my Stars that I was (as a private soldier) was beneath their notice.

The Colonel was delighted with it, indeed the most fulsome flattery is swallowed by him as the genuine coin.

How are you all getting along? Do you have it so cold yet? How is Uncle Higgens[1] flourishing? Tell me all the news when you write.

Give my love to all the folks.

You see I have got these pages mixed up. I will close for the present write to me soon & often.

Affectionately

M. Lafay. Gordon

Camp in the Wilderness May 21st 1864.

Dear Uncle:

YOUR letters dated April 9 and 15th respectively was only received this morning and as I am on Guard today and can write there I will scribble you a line in pencil.

I do not remember when my last to you was written but by letters to grand Pa[2] and to [home?] you have been apprised of our

[1] The writer's aunt, Delilah Gordon, born September 15, 1830, married first Harvey Higgins, and second John I. Worley.

[2] Mark Gordon, born January 22, 1794.

movements from Hilton Head to Gloucester Point, and thence to our Landing at "Bermuda Hundred" and all our operations up to a week ago. Since that time we have been five days on Picket and two or three nights in the trenches and yesterday we had a very severe engagement with the Rebels. I will first say that our forces had a *heavy* battle two or three days since and the loss was heavy on both sides. Our men held their ground but in the night withdrew to this point, and are now strongly intrenched. I understand that the Rebels [are] in our front in heavy force—some of the prisoners say that a great part of Lee's army is here. They are now within a short distance of our works, and I think it probable we will have to fight them at the works soon. When that comes I am confident that we will be able to repulse them and punish them severely. But to yesterday's affair. After lying in the trenches all night we were taken out to the skirmish line yesterday at about eleven o'clock. The advance of both lines were firing almost continuously. Soon after we arrived there the Rebels made a demonstration against our line with a force consisting of three Regts (according to the report of Prisoners) and for a time our line wavered and even broke but soon rallied retook their lost ground and for six long hours we held our position. That you may imagine its extent I will say that our boys fired from sixty to one hundred rounds of cartridges A part of the time the Rebs were but a short distance from us and in plain view. We were in a dense wood or the Regt would have been cut up a great deal [more] As it was we did not lose more than about thirty. Comp. G lost one killed Corp'l G. W. Kenny and one wounded Benj. Geho[e], wounded in the breast but it is thought he will recover.

Evening.

I again resume my pen. I was speaking of our [Co. ?] Munce Rogers was among the wounded. It was thought last night that his wound would prove mortal but I see him today and find that it was not at all serious.

You enquire if I think the Regt will preserve its organization. I answer not after our time is out unless it is filled up. When we go out there will be about 180 men left that is if they are not killed during the coming campaign.

You mention that you are opposed to the Soldiers voting on account of Officers exerting an influence over the Soldiers. I do not think that is the case, as I believe the majority would rather vote contrary to their officers' wishes than not. In my opinion what hurts M'Clellan most in the army is the company he keeps. He appears to be to[o] familiar with the Woods of N. Y. and such men who have such a violent love for the constitution. The[y] ask who would be his cabinet if he were elected President? Probably the Woods, Wall of N Jersey, Gov. Seymour, and the Vallandighammers of Ohio and the Western States, *Gov* Woodward, Bigler or the Rt. Hon. John L. Dawson of Penna. I give it as my humble opinion that the party that favors the dis-enfranchisement of the Soldiers is gone up, when the War closes. And how will it be with men who refuse to vote for a resolution of *thanks* to the men who have offered their lives in behalf of our country [?]

And while I think of it I will say that it is all humbug about papers being kept from the army, I mean Democratic Papers. I have been getting the Messenger ever since I was at home, and it does more to sicken me of sycophanting Democracy than all the Republican

Papers put together. (I mean the Bigler, Dawson, Crawford, Waddell, [Gabe?] Cook faction.)

The Grammar arrived all right and situated as we are now I would rather you would have kept it. But when we were at Hilton Head I had very good opportunities for study. I am still on Guard. The Regiment went on picket last night and my Guard was not relieved. I understand that the authorities have made an arrangement to stop picket firing. And I am glad to hear it as it has been little else than murder for several days past.

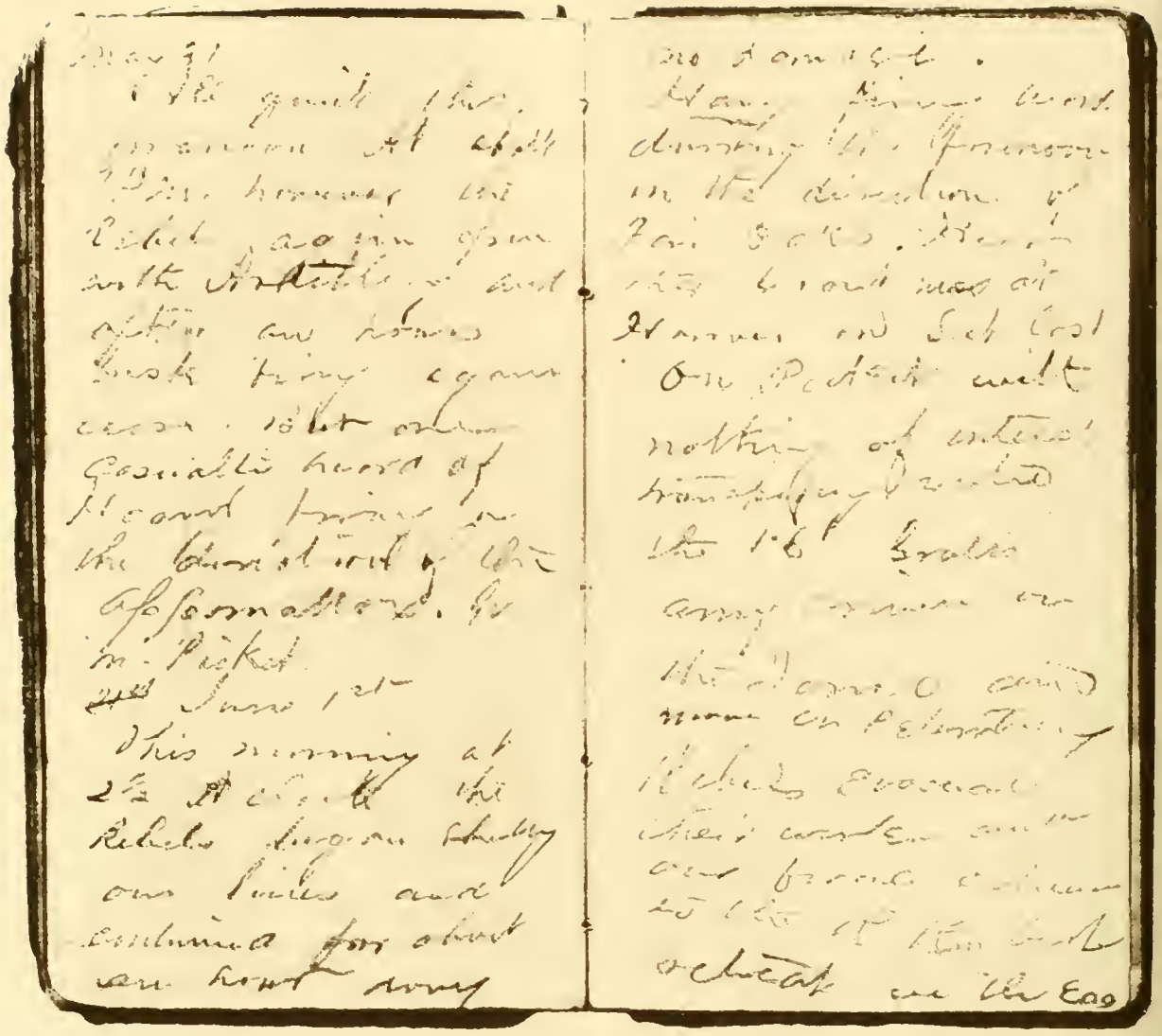
Pa is well and is in command of the Company, he was restored to duty two or three days since. By the way after our late battle the other day Gen. Terry came back to the breastworks and proposed three cheers for our Brigade, which was given by the troops with a right good will. I fear from what I hear that Ben [Gehoe?] is mortally wounded but hope it is not the case. He was one of our best soldiers.

You and I agree exactly in our opinions of Bennett. He is nothing but a talented & accomplished old rascal, entirely void of principle and conscience, who would do anything to advance the interests of the Herald, no difference if the interests of the whole nation be sacrificed.

I *rejoice* to learn that there is still Patriotism enough in Greene County to make persons volunteer to serve their country in the sheriff's & other offices. I cannot give my opinion as to your choice. I think I would vote for the one who would keep within the county as the most. I suppose they all firmly believe they will be elected. "This is a very vain world"

[*The last part of this letter is missing*]

DIARY



M. L. Gordon's Diary

DIARY

M. Lafayette Gordon
85th Regt Pa. Vols.
Suffolk, Va

November 14th 1862

Beautiful day. On Guard.

15th

Windy. Building our Tent.

16th

Sunday. Inspection as usual. Very windy. Received a letter from H. S. C——d [*sic*]

17th

Fair. On guard A party sent out on a reconnaisance.

19th

Party returned— drove the Rebels across Black water. Killed 2 or three. Lost 23 men as prisoners

Nov. 21 [*st*]

Rainy. On Picket

23d

Sunday. Visited the 11 [10?] Pa. Cavalry &c. &c This day a year ago was our first in Camp, at Kasy.

December 3d 1862

Rainy all day. Two Regiments Pa Drafted Militia arrived yesterday. Tannehill returned to the Camp.

5th

Left Suffolk, and took up line of march toward North Carolina Rainy all the time Marched all day Halted in the eve 24 miles from Suffolk. Co. G. on Picquet. Terrible night without fire our clothes all *wet.*

6th

Marched to Gatesville encamped for the night

7th

Left Gatesville in the morn and marched three miles to Chowan River—embarked on Gun Boat Lancer Cap Norez and proceeded down River Passed Roan[o]ke River Edenton and other places of note The [——?] road 6 inches deep.

8th

Passed Roanoke Island. Saw Gen Foster. Saw piles in Albamarle Sound driven by Rebs to Blockade the channel

9th

Steamed up Pamlico Sound and Neuse River Landed and co Bivouacked a mile S.E. of Newbern

10th

Visited N——ne [*sic*] Went into the country

11th

Took up our line of march on the Trent Road under command of Gen Foster. Force near 15,000 Took one prisoner.

12th

Continued our march, went about twenty miles Better country than Va. Ruined Houses. Probably the work of Rebels. Our Cavalry had a skirmish with the Rebels—took 15 or 20 Prisoners and killed and wounded some. Fair

13th

Had another skirmish with the Rebels Our Regt in the swamp. One Gen captured by the our [*sic*] Regiment. Several Prisoners taken and two killed

14th

This day will long be remembered by our Regt. for it has proved itself to be a fighting Regt. We *whipped* the Rebels at "Kinston Bridge" Were six hours in the swamp—water up to our knees. Gallant charge b[y] 85th & 103d Lost 1 killed and 8 wounded 103/15 " [*i.e.* killed] and 52 " [*i.e.* wounded] 10 Pieces Artillery and a large amount o[f] small arms capt. 500 Prisoners Capt. Rebels retreat and Kinston occupied by our Forces. Warm welcome by a Union Lady. How grateful we should be to Him who disposes of all things

---

15th

Recrossed the Neuse River and marched toward Goldsboro Marched until 11 o'clock

16th

Continued march Battle of White Hall Under fire but not engaged. On Picket Rail Road Bridge burned by our Cavalry

M. Lafayette Gordon

17th

Marched to a point near Goldsboro. The Rail Road Bridge shelled and some Infantry engaged. 85th in line of Battle. Bridge Burned and track destroyed. Start for Newbern. Attacked in our rear March back. Rebels would not come on.

18th

March toward Newbern.

M. Lafayette Gordon

20[th]

Arrived at Newbern Heard news of Burnside[']s Repulse which cast a gloom over [——?]

25th

Pleasant day. Nothing to eat for Breakfast.

Jan 1st 1863.

Crossed Trent River and encamped.

13th

Recrossed the River and camped about four miles from New Berne. Col. Howell given a Brigade

15[th]

Drilled our Regt as skirmishers Heavy rain

M. LAFAYETTE GORDON

Jan 25th 1862 [1863]

Struck Tents and marched to Newberne took the cars at 10 P.M. for Morehead City. The Cars were poor miserable affairs being the kind commonly used for transporting cord wood Arrived at Morehead in the night and embarked next morning on Transport Ranger. Found quite a fleet in the harbor Saw Beaufort it is quite a pretty place as seen from the land but I 'm told by those who visited it that the streets are composed of loose sand to the depth of four or five inches

29[th]

Steamed out thro Beaufort Inlet (guarded by fort Min [?]) found the sea running very high and all hands were soon *sea sick*

F'b 1st

Arrived off Hilton Head.

Feb 8th

Debarked on St Helena Island

April 1

Broke up Camp on St. Helena and embarked on the "Ranger"

2*d*

At Sunset steamed out the harbor.

3*d*

Put into "North Edisto Inlet." Went out about noon and at dark were safely anchored in Stone Inlet

4*th*

Debarked on Cole[']s Island. It is evident that an attack on Charleston is intende[d] what the result will be God only knows Oh, that our trust may be in him If it be his will may we be successful

5*th*

Again struck tents and at 11 P.M embarked and went to "Folly Island ["] accompanied by 39th Ill [?] & 100 N. Y.

6*th*

Marched near 10 miles along the Beache & in the eve bivouacked at the northern extremity of the Isle. Heard the enemy's Drums beating for Dress Parade.

7*th*

To day the Fleet of Iron Clads steamed up Charleston Harbor on a reconnaisance At about two P.M. Fort Sumpter opened upon them and continued until in the eve Co "G" on picket. Saw the signals from Fort Sumpter and the Rebel Batteries, also from the Fleet

8*th*

Saw Fort Sumter with a glass and a Rebel Steamer moving down the Harbor. 12. M.

9th

In the evening we returned and marched down the Isle—met the 39th Ill. taking Parrott guns up the Island Went through an obscure road to a cornfield in the heart of the Isle

10th

Weather continues warm & pleasant. On guard.

Sunday April 19th

Very warm. and sultry. No news from home Subscribed a few days since for the Knickerbocker Still in good health for which I should be devoutly thankful May He so move our hearts that our life may be to his glory.

M. L. GORDON

Sunday April 26

'T is a most Beautiful day The Sun as if the envoy of his creator smiles out upon us this morning creating happiness and pleasure wherever he goes. How like the sunshine is Gods blessings toward men day after day year after year in whatever country or clime we are situated, in all conditions it is with us. It fulfils the part alloted it by the creator. How much do we fall short.

M. L. GORDON. 85 Pa Vols

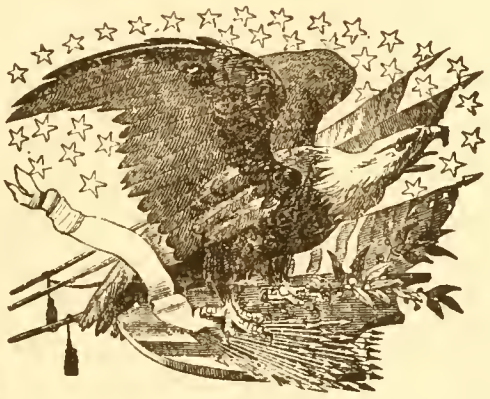
May 4th

Raining all fore-noon. Wrote a letter, looking for a mail. In the afternoon went down to the beach.

14th

Raining today The flags of the Rebels at half mast. Heard that Gen. Hooker had advanced on and whipped the Rebels under Lee. In the evening heard that "Stonewall" Jackson had been killed.

To all whom it may Concern.



Know ye, That M. Lafayette Gordon a

Sergeant of ~~Captain~~ Co. "John A. Gordon's"

Company, (G,) 155th Regiment of Pennsylvania Infantry

VOLUNTEERS, who was enrolled on the Twenty-eighth day of September one thousand eight hundred and Sixty One to serve Three years or during the war, is hereby **Discharged** from the service of the United States, this Twenty Second day of November, 1864, at Pittsburg by reason of Expiration of Term of Service

(No objection to his being re-enlisted is known to exist.*)

Said M. Lafayette Gordon was born in Greene County in the State of Pennsylvania, is twenty years of age, five feet six inches high, fair complexion, grey eyes, light hair, and by occupation, when enrolled, a Farmer

Given at Pittsburg this Twenty Second day of November 1864

G. Ed. Williams
1st Lt. U.S.A.
~~Commanding the Reg't.~~
Mustering Officer

* This sentence will be erased *should there be anything in the conduct or physical condition* of the soldier rendering him unfit for the Army

[G. O. No. 90.]

Jno. Brown
Co. 85th Pa. Vols

Kearney County Recorded in Mortgage
Book No 1 vol 1 page 416.
Witness my hand & official
Seal this 20th day 1865
D. Brown
Recorder
By. W. L. Woodell,
Deputy, Recorder.

Sat 23 Feb 1865
Rec'd 1.50

OATH OF IDENTITY.

_____

*of the town of*_____

*County of*_____*in the State of*_____

On this_____day of_____in the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty_____personally appeared before me, the undersigned, a Justice of the Peace for the county and_____above mentioned,_____ who, being duly sworn according to law, declares that he is the identical_____who was a_____in the company commanded by Captain_____in the regiment _____commanded by_____; that he enlisted on the_____day of_____ for the term of_____and was discharged at_____on the_____day of_____by reason of_____

_____

_____

Sworn and subscribed to before me the day and year above written.

_____

I certify that_____before whom the above affidavit purports to have been made, is a Justice of the Peace duly authorized to adminis... oaths, and that the above is his signature.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal, this_____day of_____ L. S. in the year_____ at_____in the State of_____.

_____

*Clerk of the*_____

15th

On guard, and still raining.

16th

Many rumors afloat in regard to Hooker[']s success. In the evening it was reported that the Rebels were attempting to cross on this Island

May 26th

All quiet. F. M. Rush expects to start home on furlough. Fair & warm.

M. L. Gordon

Friday July 10th

Our land Batteries and Monitors opene[d] on the Rebels on Morris Island & after a bombardment of three hours our Infantry landed and drove the Rebels capturing several large seige guns.

11th

We attempted to storm Fort Wagner but were repulsed

18[th]

Again attempted to storm Wagner but were repulsed with severe loss Our Regt crossed on the Island.

Aug. 9th

J. R. Thomas wounded.

Friday July 10th 1863.

Our land batteries and monitors opened on Morris Island and after a bombardment of three hours our Infantry landed and drove the Rebels, capturing eleven seige guns and about two hundred prisoners Small arms &c.

11th

We attempted to storm Fort Wagner but were repulsed with severe loss.

18th

Again attempted to assault Wagner but were again repulsed. Cols. Shaw and Putnam killed. Gen Strong mortally wounded The 85th crossed onto Morris Island. Gen Gillmore changed his plan and commences approaching Wagner by Parallels.

July 29th

We have had considerable firing since my last *entree*, from Fort Johnson. We are still approaching Wagner. John M'Donald wounded[:] one arm amputated at the wrist the other at the shoulder.

Aug 9th

Part of Co "G" on Picket. Joshua Thomas wounded by fragment of shell—serious.

17th

Commenced bombarding Sumter. Col. Howell wounded, firing heavy, ours very accurate.

21st

Firing since my last entry continuous and the effect very visible on Fort Sumter. H. B. Patton wounded in thigh severely Wm Bowers " [*i.e.* severely wounded] Our Regt lost over twenty wounded & killed

30th

Robert Ross wounded, in the shoulder Lt Col. Purviance killed, by our own guns. Our Regiment has been doing the advance picket duty, a very dangerous post.

Sept 7th

Forts Wagner & Gregg were evacuated by the Rebels last night. Our Brigade was the first to enter Wagner. E. David wounded, by torpedo

April 22d 1864

Left Hilton Head and embarked on the Steamer Fulton and sailed for Fortress Monroe

25"

Arrived at Fortress Monroe and were ordered to Yorktown at which point we landed on the Gloucester side on the morning of the 28"

May 4" 1864

Embarked on the Steamer Guide and during the night proceeded to Fortress Monroe

May 5"

Steamed up the James River accompanying Gen Butler who commands the 10" & 18" "Army Corps" Passed Fort Powhattan Jamestown & other places of note which I had seen nearly two years since

6"

A great part of our forces having landed on the eve of the 5" we debarked on the morning of the 6" and after eating our breakfast took up our line of march in the direction of Ft Darling. After marching about six miles we bivouacked for the night.

7"

On Picket Brisk engagement on the left of our line. Our Forces succeeded in destroying the Petersburg & Richmond Rail Road.

8[th]

Returned to camp.

9"

Our forces made a general advance the 85" on the right in advance as skirmishers After driving out the Rebels from Ware Bottom church we were halted and during the day were relieved by the 2d Md Cavalry (colored) and returned to the Church and remained during the day

11"

Lay at the church Our men after penetrating beyond the P & R. R. R. were withdrawn, the 67" O. V. I and one or two others have an engagement with a superior force of Rebels but hold their ground against all odds. Returned to Camp

1 *May*

Lay in Camp. Worked all night on the Intrenchments.

12[th] Went on Pickett

13[th] " "

14[th] " "

15[th] " "

16[th] " "

Heavy fighting in front Infantry fighting *very* severe.

17[th]

On Pickett In the evening returned to camp.

18"

Picket firing at one A.M. At 8 A.M. a brisk engagement opened between our advance and the Rebels, lasting with scarcely a moments intermission during the day interspersed with an occasional shot from the Artillery. Lying in the trenches all day & night.

19"

Rebels opened with quite a no. of pieces of artly wounding one or two but doing but very little damage

May 20"

Lay in the trenches all last night. At about ten o[']clock the Rebels made an attack on our picket line and drove them a short distance. The 85th were ordered out and soon after we arrived they come on us in strong force. The 17" & 39" brought on double quick, and arrive just in time to save the day. Our Rifle pits are retaken, and the enemy retreat with heavy loss. Our loss 22 in killed & wounded that of the 17 & 39" some larger. George Kenny killed & Benj. Geho[e] wounded The force against us according to Petersburg Papers was Evans Brig South Carolinans & the 36" & 56". N. C. and several other Regts. The Rebels lose Gen Walker the S. C. Brigade 222 in killed & wounded & the 56" N. C. lose 95, losses of other Regts unknown. Relieved in the evening by 100 N. Y.

21"

On Fatigue duty Heavy firing Attacked by the Rebels at 11 P.M. After a hot engagement the rebels are repulsed with heavy loss. Our artillery firing the most splendid I ever witnessed. On guard.

22[*d*]

Still on Guard Regt on Picket All quiet along the lines

23[*d*]

Still on Guard Some picket firing.

24[*th*] & 25[*th*]

Nothing important. Lie in the trenches every night.

26"

Regt on Pickett [_____

_____?]

27"

During the Day there was a small Artillery duel between our & the Rebel Batteries Relieved from picket in eve.

28"

All quiet Went on Picket in eve.

29"

All quiet Relieved from picket.

30th

Lay in Camp. At 4 P.M. the Rebels opened with Artillery but were replied to so rapidly that they soon become willing to quit. Very heavy firing heard in the direction of Fair Oaks Va

May 31"

All quiet this forenoon At about 1 P.M. however the Rebels again open with Artillery and after an hours brisk firing again cease. But one casualty heard of. Heavy firing in the direction of the Appomattox. Go on Picket.

June 1st

This morning at 2½ o[']clock the Rebels began shelling our lines and continued for about an hour doing no damage. Heavy firing heard during the forenoon in the direction of Fair Oaks. Hear that Grant was at Hanover on Sat last.

On Picket with nothing of interest transpiring until the 16th Grant[']s army arrive on the James and move on Petersburg Rebels evacuate their works and our forces advance to the R R but retreat in the eve

17[*th*]

Skirmishing all day. Heavy firing hear[d] in the evening in the direction of Petersburg[1]

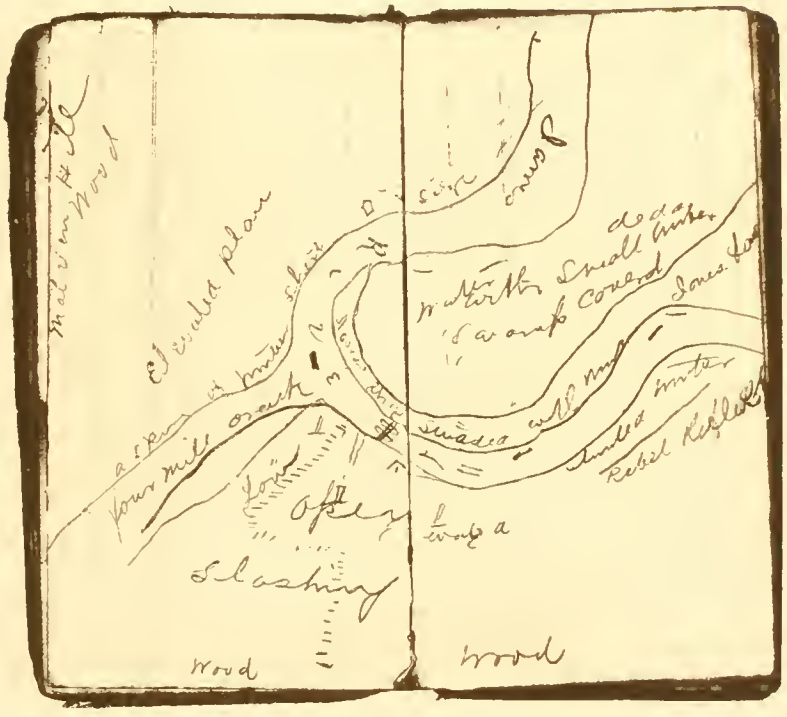
[1] The remainder of the Diary consists of these items:

(1) List of Guard.

(2) List of Casualties.

(3) Cash Account.

(4) Sketch of James River near Four Mile Creek, as follows:



(5) List of Regiments [seen ?].

(6) The following verses:

"Uncombed unwashed unshaven and unshorn
His clothes in strips by cheprasal [*sic*] are torn;
Toes peeping from his boots and battered hat
Tired, wet, and weary as a drowned rat:—
How changed from him we in the City knew,
In stove pipe beaver and a long-tailed blue,
Cigar in mouth and carpet-bag in hand

By rail road bound to Dixies land.
His store of wood collected for the night,
To dry his clothes and cook his little bite
A broken shovel fries his meat, and bakes
A hasty mixture of unleavened cakes
An oyster can for Tea-pot will suffice
And pine or fir-leaves Hyson's place supplies,
His supper over he improves a chance
To patch with flour sack his demolished pants."

(7) Expenditures at Commissary.

(8) List of Words: "errant, pristine, emancipate, amamensis."

(9) Expenditures for food:

"Oct. 18 To	Two lbs butter @ 50	$1.00
" 20	Ham	1.80
	Fish	1.50
" 26th	Potatoes ½ bush.	.50
29th	Fresh Beef 3 lbs	.40
31st	Butter by Ad—	.50
"	Milk by Adam	.60

Nov. 5"

(10) List of Accoutrements:

"Gun & Baynets
sc-d [*sic*]
Cartridge Box
" " belt
Canteen Box plate
" " " plate
Waist belt
" " plate
Cap ponches
Gun slings
Knapsacks
" straps
Haversacks
Canteens
Shelter tents
Muskets Box"

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Page 4, *ll.* 8–10, *The passage* When the College . . . number of years *was originally a separate paragraph preceding the first full paragraph on the page.*

Page 4, *l.* 24, the city *substituted for* Washington.

Page 5, *l.* 5, went to *substituted for* visited.
l. 20, in April *transposed from end of sentence.*
l. 24, from *inserted before* seasickness.

Page 6, *l.* 4, I *inserted before* had here.

Page 7, *l.* 10, ahead *substituted for* in front.
l. 14, almost entirely *substituted for* for the most part.

Page 8, *ll.* 7–12, *This paragraph was originally preceded by* I have forgotten to say that *and was placed at the end of the succeeding paragraph.*
l. 27, Here *omitted before* Agents from Pennsylvania.

Page 9, *l.* 7, leave home *substituted for* go back.
ll. 7–15, *The passage* When I got back to New York . . . decoy unwary soldiers *was originally preceded by* I forgot to say that *and was placed after the next to the last sentence of the succeeding paragraph;* to this saloon *omitted from end of passage.*
l. 16, On reporting for duty I was told *substituted for* and I reported in New York and was asked.
l. 27, this *substituted for* reaching Fort Hamilton.

Page 10, *l.* 1, He *substituted for* my father.
l. 11, in Waynesburg *substituted for* at home.

Page 13, *l.* 12, and *inserted before* about.
l. 19, commanding those from *substituted for* of.

Page 17, *l.* 8, the duties of which office *substituted for* which duties.

Page 18, *l.* 13, taken prisoners *substituted for* prisoners.

Page 19, *l.* 10, of May *inserted before* the Rebels.

Page 20, *l.* 21, almost *substituted for* about.

Page 21, *ll.* 18–19, Pa. *omitted after* Pittsburgh.

APPENDIX B

"COMPANY F, of the Eighty-fifth Pennsylvania Infantry, and a portion of Company G, were recruited in Greene County. The regiment was organized on the 12th of November, 1861, by the choice of the following officers: Joshua B. Howell, colonel; Norton M'Giffin, lieutenant-colonel; and Absalom Guiler, major. During the winter the regiment was engaged in drill and in fatigue duty, across the east branch of the Potomac, in the construction of works for the defense of Washington. In the spring of 1862 it moved to Meridian Hill, and was brigaded with the 101st and 103d Pennsylvania regiments, and the 96th New York, under command of General Wessells.

"In the Peninsula campaign, under McClellan, the regiment was engaged in the siege of Yorktown, and in the battle of Williamsburg with a loss of two wounded, one mortally. At Fair Oaks, on the 31st of May, while engaged in fortifying the position, it was vigorously attacked by the enemy under General Joseph E. Johnston. The regiment occupied the rifle-pits on the right of the main work, a redoubt held by Hart's battery. General Casey, who held the front was vigorously pushed, but made a stout resistance, throwing grape and canister with terrible effect. He was finally obliged to retire to his supports. In the seven days' battles which ensued, which resulted in the change of base by McClellan from the Chickahominy to the James, the regiment was not actively engaged. When McClellan evacuated the Peninsula, and went to the support of Pope before Washington, Keyes' corps, the Fourth, to which the regiment belonged, remained on duty at Fortress Monroe.

"On the 5th of December, 1862, Wessell's brigade was ordered to Newberne, North Carolina, to reinforce Foster, and upon its arrival joined in an expedition to destroy a rebel gunboat on the Neuse, break up the railroad bridge near Goldsboro, and make a diversion in favor of Burnside at Fredericksburg. At West Creek the enemy was found ready to dispute the passage. Wessells had the advance, and throwing the Eighty-fifth to the right of the road, and Ninth New Jersey to the left, crossed the stream and advanced upon the flanks of the enemy's position, compelling a hasty retreat. Two pieces of artillery and a number of prisoners were the fruits of victory. On the following morning the command moved forward, Wessells upon the left, and soon came upon the enemy in the well made fortifications of Kings-

ton. But by pushing through a swamp, thought to be inaccessible, they entered at the side left open, and immediately charged in face of a hot fire, and soon put the enemy to rout. A brisk skirmish was had at White Hall, and on the 17th the defenders of the bridge at Goldsboro were swept back and the destruction of the bridge, the main object of the expedition, was effected.

"Towards the close of January, 1863, General Foster was ordered with a part of his army to proceed to South Carolina, to co-operate with General Hunter in his operations against Charleston. Colonel Howell now had command of the brigade, and Lieutenant-Colonel Purviance of the regiment. At the head of Folly Island the troops witnessed the first bombardment of Fort Sumpter, by Admiral Dupont. In June, 1863, General Hunter was superceded by General Gilmore. To possess Morris Island it was necessary to erect powerful batteries at the north end of Folly Island. While at this work the dense underbrush shielded the working parties from view. In this duty the 85th shared, working by night, and watching by day. When all was ready the obstructions were cleared away, and fire opened from forty-four heavy guns. An assault followed by which the enemy's first line of works was cleared, but Fort Wagner, the main work, still held out. Gilmore determined to reduce it by regular siege approaches. 'Ground was broken on the 21st of July, and the work, which was terribly exhausting, was pushed forward with the utmost vigor, day and night; neither the heat of a tropical climate, nor the missiles of a vigilant foe, were allowed to interfere with the labor. On the 20th of August the 85th Pennsylvania, 100th New York, and the 3d New Hampshire, were detailed to occupy the advanced trenches, each twenty-four hours in turn. The trenches were shallow, and afforded little protection from the enemy's fire. On the left were his powerful guns on James Island and in Fort Johnson; in front those of Sumter, Gregg and Wagner; and on the right Fort Moultrie. The nights were damp and cold, and during the day the thermometer stood 100° in the shade. The casualties were numerous, and the sick list increased with alarming rapidity. The 85th took its turn in this terrible ordeal, and on the 21st had one killed and twenty wounded, three mortally; on the 24th, one killed and seven wounded, one mortally; on the 27th, two killed and eight wounded, three mortally; on the 30th, four killed and eight wounded, Lieutenant-Colonel Purviance being of the number killed; on the 2d of September, five wounded, one mortally.' The

85th with an aggregate strength of 451 on going upon the outer works, could muster but 270 fit for duty when recalled. Two attempts to surprise and capture Fort Gregg proving unsuccessful, General Gilmore determined to again attempt to take it by assault. But the bombardment by sea and land for forty hours induced the enemy to retire, and the island was occupied.

"Upon the death of Colonel Purviance, Major Campbell was made Lieutenant-Colonel, and Captain Abraham, Major. Active operations were continued until the middle of April, 1864, when the Tenth corps was ordered north to reinforce the Army of the James. The 85th was of the first brigade, Howell's, first division, Terry's. The usual service of fortifying and picket duty continued until the 20th, when Howell's brigade was ordered to charge and drive out the enemy in front. This was gallantly and successfully executed, but with a loss of two killed and twenty-one wounded. The rebel General Walker was wounded and taken prisoner.

"On the 14th of June, Grant's troops began to cross the James, and the Tenth corps took possession of the works between the James and the Appomattox. The enemy soon pressed heavily in front of Howell, and the fighting was of unusual severity. Finally the Union line was pushed back to the original line of battle. The loss of the 85th was five killed and two wounded. In the expedition to Deep Bottom, which was made on the 13th of August, in which the Second and Tenth corps engaged the corps of Longstreet and Hill, the 85th had two killed and nineteen wounded, five mortally. In the affair of the 16th, Terry's division was hotly engaged, the 85th participating in a charge, in which the enemy, by withholding his fire while protected by works, was able to deliver it in a manner to produce great destruction, the regiment losing nine killed and fifty-four wounded. In the operations on the south side of the Appomattox by Terry's troops the regiment participated, sustaining slight losses, until the 14th of October, when the veterans and recruits were transferred to the 188th, and on the 22nd of November it was mustered out of service."

From *History of Greene County, Pennsylvania*, by SAMUEL P. BATES (Chicago, 1888), pp. 390–392.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 013 764 324 8